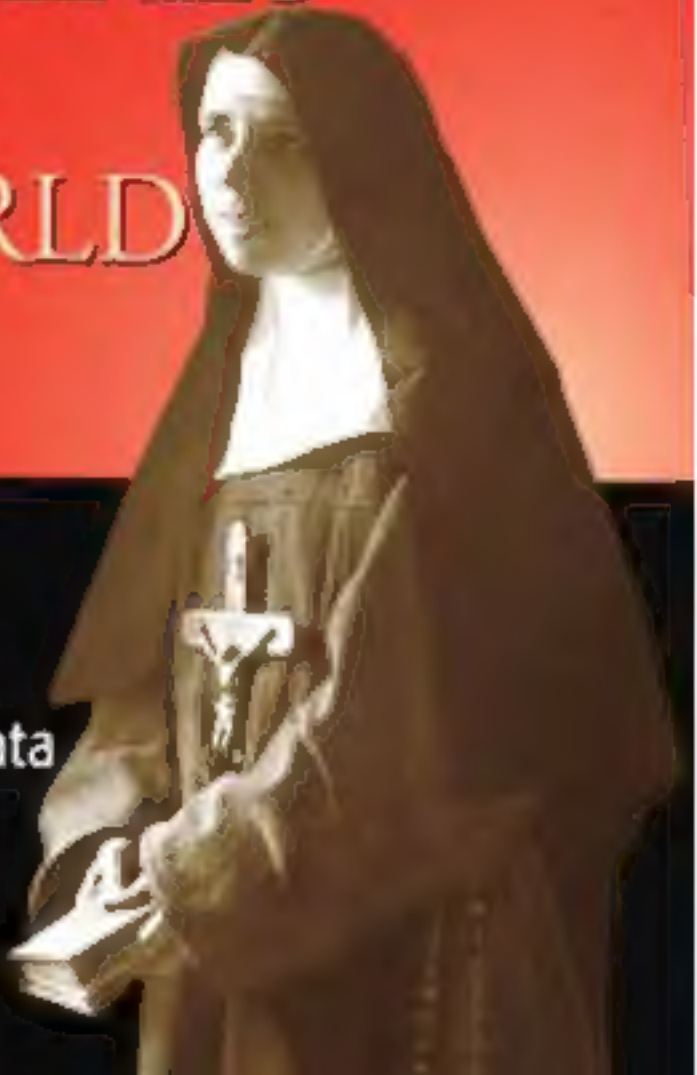
Lorenzo Sales, IMC

JESUS APPEALS to the WORLD



From the writings of

Sr. Consolata Betrone

JESUS APPEALS TO THE WORLD

The Unceasing Act of Love Revealed to the Capuchin Nun, Sister Mary Consolata

(1903-1946)

LORENZO SALES, IMC

Translated by Alfred J.M. Mausolff

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PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

THE ITALIAN ORIGINAL of Father Sales' important little book has in 1955 already seen four editions; its French translation two, and the German version, five! And at this writing, Christ's inspiring new Message is also appearing in Dutch, Croatian, Spanish and Portuguese.

The book has also been translated into Serbian, Bulgarian, Czech, Romanian, Polish, Slovakian, Slovenian, Russian, Japanese, Chinese and Greek, but these manuscripts have not been published because of the prevailing political conditions.

Through this present translation, the English speaking world will now become acquainted with Our Lord's latest, most tender appeal for love:

"I prefer an act of love and a Communion of love to any other gift."

"I thirst for love!"

"If people would only love Me, what felicity would reign in this unhappy world!"

"Love Me, and you will be happy; the more you love Me, the happier you will be!"

"Do not lose time! Every act of love means a soul!"

"By means of unceasing prayer, prepare the triumph of My Heart and of My love throughout the earth!"

A.J.M.M

INTRODUCTION

SISTER MARY CONSOLATA, in the world Pierina Betrone, was born on April 6th, 1903 at Saluzzo, Piedmont, and in the following year her family moved to Turin. While she was making her thanksgiving after Communion on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1916 — she was then 13 years old — she heard for the first time an inner Voice which asked, *Do you wish to be entirely Mine?* Without comprehending the full implications of the question, she replied, "Yes, Jesus!" To belong entirely to Jesus meant for her to become a nun. She strove hard for her vocation and for a time was even subjected to a painful spiritual trial, but finally, on April 17th, 1929, the Solemnity of Saint Joseph, she was able to realize her ardent aspirations and was received into the Capuchin convent of Turin.

Ten years later Sister Consolata passed over to the new convent at Moriondo (Testona), which had been founded to take care of the greatly increased community, and there she crowned her short but intense life with a holy death on July 18th, 1946, at the age of 43. Her earthly remains are interred in the cemetery of Moncalieri.

Although Sister Consolata was favored by God with great spiritual gifts, these nevertheless passed unobserved in her small community; nor did they ever cause her to relax her earnest striving for the summit of sanctity. Every step on the way to

perfection cost her self-denial, and to the very end of her life she had to struggle valiantly against her own shortcomings; nor were all manner of violent temptations spared her; but she was outstanding for generosity, tenacity, and zeal as a combatant, and her dedication to God and neighbor knew no bounds.

Sister Consolata was given a particular mission and vocation by God like that of Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, whose glorious disciple she was. Her mission, for the fulfillment of which she offered herself as a victim-soul in response to a divine request, was for the benefit of all those men and women whom she liked to call her Brothers and Sisters — the souls of priests and Religious who had gone astray; and most consoling are the promises which Jesus made to her in this regard.

Sister Consolata's particular vocation was one of love, to round out, so to speak, the Little Flower's doctrine of the Little Way of Love by giving it a concrete form which could be practiced and achieved by all souls who feel themselves called to it. This doctrine or way of love may be summed up in the following three points which are the nucleus of Our Lord's instructions to Sister Consolata:

1. To offer an unceasing act of love from the heart,

2. To have a smiling "yes" for everyone; to see and treat Jesus in everyone,

3. To have a grateful "yes" for everything (for every divine request).

These three points are also frequently expressed in this formula: "Never omit one act of love, one act of charity, or one sacrifice from one Communion to the next."

Here then is a veritable program of spiritual training which takes in the duties of the soul toward God, her neighbor, and herself. And it must be noted that, according to Our Lord's own assurances, it is the faithfulness with which the soul maintains the unceasing act of love that makes it easy for her to be al-

ways ready with a "yes" for everyone and everything. This unceasing act of love, therefore, constitutes the essential purpose of this new and merciful manifestation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and so this book will concern itself exclusively with the unceasing act of love. Our own part in this work has consisted merely in compiling and arranging the material in a logical sequence; we have added only what seemed necessary in order to tie the various parts together and to offer certain short explanations and reflections.

Sister Consolata's style was plain and unaffected. We would not know how to improve upon it; and even if we could, we would not dare to cross God's designs, for it is our conviction that Jesus chose, for the purpose of revealing this doctrine, the least adapted instrument, so that it would be all the more apparent that it was He who was doing and is still doing everything. In this way also it would not be possible for man's frequently confused interpretations to distort His simple and clear doctrine, each word of which is light, truth, and life.

Ought one to consider that this book, or rather the doctrine it contains, is intended for everyone? In our opinion one must distinguish between a life of love in general and the practice of the life of love according to a definite method. Under the first aspect these pages are beyond doubt meant for everyone, for the great commandment to love God applies to all; the divine instructions contained in this book are in substance nothing but an insistent appeal to observe that commandment, and that concerns not only love but the perfection of love.

The case is different, however, in regard to the practice of the life of love in accordance with the method which Jesus taught to Sister Consolata. These divine lessons, though most useful to everyone under certain aspects, are quite evidently addressed to a rather limited number of souls, that is to those religious or lay-people who are favored with a particular voca-

tion to love, and therefore with an attraction to the life of love, and who wish to live it in all its perfection.

In any case, one thing appears certain: nothing contained in this book can in any way interfere with the spirit which is the peculiar feature of every religious congregation, whether contemplative or active. On the contrary, it is likely to prove a great aid in maintaining it in vigor and making it flourish again by leading souls to the perfect exercise of the love of God, of neighborly charity, and of Christian mortification, which are the three essential requisites of the religious life and of perfection; and all this is in addition to the divine promises which we will relate. Jesus desires the spiritual renovation of the world, and He desires it to come about through a more vigorous renewal of the supernatural life in souls, and particularly in those souls who are consecrated to Him. These are to form the divine leaven which will cause the mass to ferment.

Through the Immaculate Heart of Mary we entrust this modest work to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and ask a blessing upon it, that Christ's reign of love may spread throughout the world.

Fr. Lorenzo Sales, IMC

1

SPIRITUAL CHILDHOOD AND THE LIFE OF LOVE

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE LITTLE FLOWER

The Way of Spiritual Childhood is not a novel doctrine and it does not stem from man. It is found in the Gospels. Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.[1] Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and do not hinder them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Amen, I say to you, whoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall not enter into it.[2] Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.[3] I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for so has it seemed good in Your sight.[4]

The entire Magnificat is but an exaltation of the spiritual childhood, the one upon whose lips the Church places the

[1] Matthew 18:3
[2] Mark 10:14-15
[3] Matthew 18:4
[4] Matthew 11:25-26

[illegible]

[illegible] you may grow unto salvation.[2]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Sister Consolata is one of these

[illegible]

[illegible]

---

[1] [illegible] Corinthians 1:27-29

[illegible] Peter 2:2

[illegible]

fondest desires[illegible]

[illegible]
Vittorio Ercuwarde

[illegible]

[illegible] the inquiries of the [illegible] so that she was worn down by her to the utter. Was it [illegible] that doctrine and to give it a practical form.

THE SELF-SAME SPIRIT

[illegible] that Sister [illegible] was the recipient of some [illegible] as the vision of the blessed Virgin a [illegible] concerning her father's illness, enlightenment as to her own future mission, and the mysterious wound [illegible] appeared after she had offered herself as a victim. We are dealing here with gratuitous divine gifts which the soul cannot refuse, but as it must not seek after them. The [illegible] with regard to [illegible] as attached to them [illegible] Sister [illegible] as a [illegible] long as she was [illegible] herself profoundly humbled and [illegible] when these favors were withdrawn she was [illegible] and she waver [illegible] so little from her heroic fidelity to grace.

Instead, we [illegible] in her life all the characteristics of [illegible] and especially [illegible] the [illegible] thoughts [illegible] Sister [illegible] has no [illegible] works the one thing He asks [illegible] I perform great deeds, I demand me I [illegible] preach the Gospel, I shed my blood. But one matter

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the side of her [illegible] infant [illegible] feels the greater [illegible] the [illegible] who [illegible] caresses or the mother who lavishes them upon [illegible] desires the most beautiful little [illegible] things and [illegible] were possible [illegible] child [illegible] mother [illegible] her [illegible] care and affection [illegible] without ever [illegible] of it.

[illegible] this [illegible] a perfect [illegible] what [illegible]. They are His [illegible] them [illegible] solicitude in the most beautiful virtues. And [illegible] accept everything. [illegible] them as He pleases [illegible] press them to [illegible] them in a manner [illegible] the greatest joy [illegible] possess and [illegible]. And [illegible] this.

[illegible] these souls must be [illegible] the blue flower [illegible] those who wish [illegible] and [illegible] among the latter.

[illegible] these souls [illegible] how to forget [illegible] in [illegible] where

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] them [illegible] flew up [illegible] and [illegible] the [illegible] along the back of the bench [illegible] Father Francis, and did not disturb them, but [illegible] to lend them my heart so that they too might be [illegible] as I longed to love [illegible] One of the pockets had [illegible] and I tried to caress it [illegible] began [illegible] heart [illegible] and I returned to the [illegible] any more [illegible] explained to me [illegible] felt com[illegible] pressing it to [illegible] merely because it was frightened. How [illegible] the Heart of Jesus, which is a human heart [illegible] press [illegible] had [illegible] against hard [illegible] another thought [illegible] have [illegible] heart and caress it [illegible] compassion that merely urged me to go [illegible] same compassion which drew Jesus toward the [illegible] little pocket. And so [illegible] heart and [illegible] there.

[illegible] intimate and [illegible] used [illegible] tabernacle to pray when I thought [illegible]

[illegible] picture of Jesus blessing the children [illegible] away all fear and I came to understand that [illegible] has the same need to pray close to the loving Jesus. For the divine Heart of Jesus delights in having us near Him without much ceremony, like the children in the picture who rival one another in seeing who can press the closest to Him."

WHAT JESUS PREFERS

Jesus now [illegible] in person to confirm Sister Consolata in these sentiments and in the matter of spiritual childhood. In the intellectual visions with which she was favored, when Jesus pressed her to His divine Heart, she could always see herself, or rather her soul, under the image of a very young child. Beyond these there were also verbal instructions, and for these we quote Sister Consolata's own words: "During my first years with the [illegible] with [illegible] love for Jesus [illegible] by working [illegible] but even before the spiritual exercises connected with my first vows Jesus told me: *You trouble yourself about many things, but only one thing is necessary: to love Me.*"

Jesus here states specifically [illegible] what [illegible] one thing necessary [illegible]

[illegible] Mary [illegible] taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

While I was making my meditation in choir on Whit Sunday [illegible] Jesus asked me to make the following vow: "O Jesus, I have vowed to [illegible] you and I firmly believe that the path to be followed by me is the Way of Love. For this I abandon myself completely and [illegible] and, while cancelling all previous interpretations and trusting in Your [illegible] promise, I vow to live for love [illegible] and until my last breath, offering You one [illegible] accomplishing everything with love and [illegible] nothing but love."

[illegible] had then been shown the path which I was to follow and I found myself now fully enlightened. I came to understand that Jesus Himself wished to work in my soul [illegible] understood then that it was more necessary for me to love than to think [illegible]

Yes, an unceasing act of love! That alone and nothing else [illegible] everything, and in the practice of this love all other virtues are practiced. [illegible]

[illegible] May [illegible] 1875 a new [illegible] pointed regular [illegible] among us and at [illegible] first [illegible] Lovers, [illegible] delight each week. Then you [illegible] confessions and you will delight the Heart of [illegible] advice [illegible] and [illegible] states, as my

[illegible]

efforts to overcome one defect each week. But every great [illegible] to touch the week without having spoken a useless word or had an idle thought, etc. I gave no more thought to love, so that the Blessed Virgin one day said to me: "You lose yourself in so many trifles and you do not give to Jesus the one thing He asks for, in your last hour you will desire in vain to give longer and to perform one act of love [illegible] too late [illegible] understood [illegible] myself alone to [illegible]

[illegible] during [illegible] was [illegible] emotion and a voice which appeared to be [illegible] to the places, sorrows and sufferings [illegible] has time [illegible] and what have you done so far for souls? No thank. As that I abandoned myself to the divine will and remained in peace. I [illegible] that voice by remembering what Jesus had told me and I soon discovered the enemy's trick by which he had hoped to draw me away from my simple way of [illegible]

[illegible] **myself and to lose time.***

[illegible]

WHAT PLEASES JESUS

[illegible] manifested His satisfaction from time to time. [illegible] was maintaining herself in the spirit and state of spiritual childhood. Without a doubt she received [illegible] gifts and extraordinary graces. But was Jesus [illegible] such a nature as to [illegible] some pretension might entertain [illegible] although she did not [illegible] for his benefits [illegible] such thoughts spring [illegible] opinion regarding these treels given graces [illegible] Saint Paul [illegible] them. Jesus explained on December 15th 1935

[illegible] people are accustomed to measure the [illegible] the graces which I grant her. [illegible] them [illegible] free to act [illegible] place. For example [illegible] the graces [illegible] I have given [illegible] have no merits [illegible] that she could do more for I have [illegible] necessary. [illegible] much more grace for [illegible] because I am free to do good or become [illegible] are My weakness [illegible] that explains everything. And [illegible] for a sovereign [illegible] free to bestow [illegible] on whom he will.

[illegible] Jesus [illegible] Sisters associated with [illegible] the sanctuary of Saint Francis. As [illegible] the hour [illegible] these things to me who [illegible]

[illegible] ing as he will" (1 Corinthians 12:11)

[illegible] the great ones who might be [illegible]

Jesus replied: *to the little ones I tell everything*

Our Lord also designed to [illegible] some things about her future apostolate after death [illegible] one day complained to Him that He was telling her too much, but Jesus answered: on December 12th, 1935

You feel that I am telling you too much about your future? Thus I tell you everything? You are quite right, that is what one does when the heart is overflowing? And besides, you are so little that you are content to receive all, learn, and [illegible] Why wish that you should put everything in writing, since I [illegible] everything?

Have you ever noticed that when a mother [illegible] and handling her younger children, she will tell [illegible] things which she would not tell to one of her older children [illegible] has need to expand and to tell this little [illegible] under cover that merely [illegible] to her all the plans which she treasures for her future. She will tell her everything, [illegible] thing, just as I am now doing with you. But note that when that child begins to talk and someone asks her who made her [illegible] little dress, she will reply quite happily: my mamma, and she will delight in possessing that dress since the admiration [illegible] also [illegible]

[illegible] make the difference between great [illegible] and the poor? The latter envy the virtues with which they see them clothed, [illegible] God has bestowed them on the former, [illegible] fear that having [illegible] of them, they might [illegible] them through pride.

[illegible]

[illegible] *honor, and glory to Me alone*

[illegible] the dress to point [illegible] souls than [illegible] workings of grace for [illegible] grace [illegible]

[illegible] *delight in* [illegible] *mother* [illegible] *mother makes a name dies for her sacrifice* [illegible] *But little souls* [illegible] *because she wanted to make a name* [illegible] *unless the mother*[illegible]

[illegible] understood that [illegible] and [illegible] *mind what* [illegible]

[illegible] *seeming* [illegible] *seem* [illegible] *Mine a spirit* [illegible] *light*

[illegible] *mother* [illegible] *of which we speak here*

We ought not to be astonished at the way in which Jesus treats the souls Saint Francis de Sales describes that soul as innocent with an innocent love toward the King loving toward those who are loving, tender toward those who are tender and at times He is carried away by love to treat with divine caresses those souls who out of love for purity make them selves like children in this sense.

But even when God speaks as speech to the weakness of the creature His words are truth always pure and in accordance with the precious concepts of spiritual childhood they contain. At the end of a certain day which had been filled with extremely arduous work so that it had hindered her in the exercises of her love Sister Consolata asked pardon of Jesus for having been overwhelmed by so much work but Jesus comforted her

You must know that what would mistake a little good work for one of little worth and who are very small have made it a great work have been doing it out of love for Me and so your work is entirely Love it is the authentic act of love.

Another time when she was preparing for the Jubilee with a series of sermons which her spiritual director was preaching Jesus told her on October 10th 1933

Yes *The preaching and your abundant prayer strengthen the little souls who make everything Your work. Me nothing so I am you nothing!*

[illegible] this assurance on November [illegible]

Remember that as often My strength will [illegible] to the virtues which I place [illegible] I enable you in poverty must act in this one for you are weakness itself

[illegible] spiritual childhood therefore which drew down the favor of the Most High upon Sister Consolata. Not only did she sense herself to be small and make herself of no

account, but she felt herself utterly insignificant in the sight of God. It was this uttermost recognition of her own weakness which brought her to hope for everything from Jesus working within her.

2

THE LIFE OF LOVE AND CHRISTIAN VIRTUES

HAVE FAITH IN LOVE

IN ITS ESSENCE the Way of Spiritual Childhood consists in a life of love, and the first requisite for practicing this life of love with conviction and truthfulness is to believe in Love. This means above all to believe that God is Love. "Deus caritas est."[1] *You cannot live without love.* Our Lord once told Saint Catherine of Genoa, *because I, your God, am Love.* And in his commentaries on the Canticles Saint Bernard writes: "This Bridegroom is not only the Lover. He is Love Itself," and he continues: "Love is a great thing, provided always that it is directed to its source, that it returns to its origin, and is carried back to its well-spring so as to draw from it and flow ever more abundantly." In order that this condition might really verify itself, Christ Jesus comes to us as the Redeemer and Restorer, and from that fact we have known and have believed the love which God has for us, that He loves us, and that in fact He is Love itself.

[1] 1 John 4:16.
[2] Canticles 1:3.
[3] 1 John 4:16.

[illegible] fundamental truth is necessary in order that the [illegible] may perceive in love the primal and efficient cause of all the works of God. It was the superabundance of God's love which [illegible] him to become the Creator. His love inspired the Incarnation. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son,"[1] and the Redemption [illegible] through the faith of the Son of God, who becomes and delivers himself for me. He gave us the Eucharist and the other sacraments. "Having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them unto the end."[2] He [illegible] created the angels and those souls who have not been subjected to the punishment of the flesh of this life. He has prepared an abode of peace and lands of good will, and the abuse of His love [illegible] created birth. Saint Francis de Sales has [illegible] written: "In the hutch of Jesus Christ everything is at the service of love: everything is founded upon love, everything [illegible]."[3]

[illegible] necessary to [illegible] contemplating the great works of God, to [illegible] the wise touch of the Hand of God, and the [illegible] of [illegible] in the part [illegible] happenings in the world, and in the life of the individual [illegible] perfect touch but works of love, his thoughts, his acts. His every [illegible] even when it astonishes, bestows consolation within.

[illegible] the evening of August 25th, 1434, [illegible] all great [illegible] who had been given a book [illegible] pagans brought [illegible] read of the punish[illegible] [illegible] stood [illegible] was [illegible] to wash [illegible] bowed

[1] John 3:16.
[2] Galatians, 2:20.

[3] See Dante's *Inferno* 3:2.
[4] *Of the Love of God*, Preface.

which is impure? Wash us rather in Yours. Consolata took up to heaven. I looked, and in the marvelous blue discovered a star, the first one of the evening; and while I was contemplating it, Jesus called loudly to my heart: *Have confidence!* Meanwhile the lovely vault of heaven was clothing itself with stars and I became captivated by its mysterious charm, seating my self on the low window sill. I remained absorbed in silent contemplation. It seemed to me that heaven had ceased being displeased with the earth, and that the peaceful reign of God was spreading over this poor world."

Peace to the world, yes, but in the kingdom of God! Jesus is the Savior of the world: He is able to save it, and He desires to save it.

Consolata, I am in need of victim souls. The world is going to its ruin, but I wish to save it.

Consolata, the devil one day swore he would ruin you, and I vowed I would save you. Satan also swore he would ruin the world, and I vowed I would save it, and I will save it through the triumph of My mercy and My love. Yes, I will save the world through My merciful love! Write this down.

It should be noted that Jesus does not exclude chastisements, for these may be necessary for the salvation of the world and of souls.

Jesus explained this thought on November 5th, 1935, during the economic crisis which gripped the world before the start of the war:

The distress which reigns in the world at the present time is not the work of My justice, but of My mercy. For fewer sins are being committed because money is scarce, and many more prayers

are being raised to heaven by people in financial straits. Do not think that the sorrowful conditions on earth do not move Me, but I love souls. I wish them to be saved, and in order to achieve My end, I am constrained to be severe, but believe Me, I do it out of mercy. During times of abundance souls forget Me and are lost; in times of distress they turn to Me and save themselves. That is indeed the way it happens!

Note the [illegible] depth of these words which [illegible] all the divine distractions of the prophet Isaiah: "Woe to the Assyrian, he is the rod and staff of My anger; and My indignation is in their hands."[1] And by the lips of Jeremiah God spoke thus of Babylon: "With you I will dash nations together, and with you I will destroy kingdoms."[2] This mysterious concept of history, tragedies which were brought about by heads of nations as mere tools in God's hands, does not lessen their responsibility for the evil they have done and for which they will have to render an account; nor does this prevent the innocence of God from having every human wickedness serve to carry out the designs that is Divine Providence, [illegible]. Thus the sovereign of this present age, which accepted and [illegible] approved to one's own perdition, may be one means of sanctification and expiation.

And returning to the same thought later, again in response to Sister [illegible] as a prayer for peace, Our Lord declared on April 29th, 1942:

Pray, pray for humanity, in order that I may mitigate these storms that have come. If I permit so much torment in the world, it is for that, my purpose, to save souls for eternity. The world is going to perdition, [illegible] hastening its ruin.

As with public disasters, so it is also with the misfortunes of families and individuals. Always, even in the most desper-

[1] Isaiah 10:5

[2] Jeremiah 51:20

ately sad cases when bewildered humanity is seeking for a reason, the reply from heaven is once again Love, Goodness, the Mercy of God. One day, when Sister Consolata was grieving over the sudden death of a childhood companion by which four children had been orphaned, the oldest barely nine years old, Jesus replied:

Celeste Canda is now enjoying the beatific union for all eternity, and from heaven she is watching over the souls of her four children with greater tenderness than if she had remained on earth.

What sweet comfort, what heavenly light, do not these simple words bring to all bereaved families!

To believe in Love, in short, means to believe that Jesus loves us, wishes to save us, and that everything He does or permits, both in the great outer world and in the little world of the soul, is always for our best. Only a few souls, however, even among those dedicated to piety, possess this living and practical faith in Love. If they have it at all, it is weak and vacillates easily under the blows of the chisel with which the divine Artist is intent on perfecting the work of His hands.

Many are the souls who are inclined to see in God a severe Master rather than a kind Father. For such souls is intended Our Lord's sweet lament to Sister Consolata on November 22nd, 1935:

Do not make Me out a God of rigor, whereas I am naught but a God of Love!

For such souls is also the reply which Jesus gave to Sister Consolata's query as to how He preferred to be addressed (September 26th, 1936):

Limitless Love, infinite Goodness.

For them is also Our Lord's advice to Sister Consolata on July 26th, 1936, when she was undecided whether to write in a letter: the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, or "the Gentle Heart of Jesus."

I am the Gentle Heart of Jesus, for everyone knows that I am holy, but not all know that I am gentle.[illegible]

The soul, therefore, who desires to live in love, must ground herself well in this truth and apply it to the thousand and one details of everyday life. She must not stop at creatures and events, but must see God and His love in everything. "Oh, what must we not fear," writes Saint Francis de Sales, "and even more, what may we not hope for as children of such a Father who is so full of goodness, who loves us and wishes us to be saved, and who is so wise as to prepare and apply the means for our salvation? What goodness it was! What foresight in planning! What wisdom in execution!"[illegible]

Always in good fortune and under adverse conditions, in peacetime and in stormy times, the soul must keep her forces intact so that the cry of her unshakable faith may reach to heaven: "We have held fast to the love we have had for God. We believe in Your love for me." And this is exactly what the Apostle of Love asserted: "And we have known and have believed the love which God has for us."[illegible]

HOPE IN LOVE

Our faith in Jesus' love for us and our own love for Him raise the soul to a more perfect love, or as Saint Thomas puts it: "Hope is made more perfect through the intervention of love. . . . Love hopes for all things. . . . And as hope, as of love, there can never be too much. It is meant for all, for the innocent and for the sinner, but more especially for the latter, for whom the compassion of Jesus encompasses every soul, it does

[illegible]

[illegible] 3 John 4, 16

[illegible] *Summa Theologiae* II, II, 17, 8

[illegible] 1 Corinthians 13, 7

so in part just in the case of those who are most in need of His mercy.

Jesus came down from heaven especially to sinners. He did not come to call the just, but sinners. Hence is directed the touching solicitude of the Good Shepherd: "I am the Good Shepherd. What man of you that has a hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, does he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost until he find it? For there are ninety-nine the Father's delicate attention toward the prodigal son. Running forth quickly, he first kisses and puts it upon him and puts a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet and brings hither the fattened calf and kills it and we eat and make merry, because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found."[18] Now, first, do not come down from heaven, first, a child who was in danger, but because he was dead, not hurt, he and rush one who had fallen, not greater, but because his grace and love. Thus, there much, so [illegible] what was [illegible] the most [illegible] greatest [illegible] behold My Servant whom I have chosen, My Beloved in whom My Soul has been well pleased. The bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not extinguish, and in His Name the Gentiles shall hope.[19]

Now, we also send down the avenging fire desired by the Apostles to avenge the erring. You know not what spirit you are of. The Son of Man came not to destroy souls but to save. Rather, we, like unto Martha, [illegible] blaze [illegible] and [illegible] just like on the earth, and what sin

[18] Matthew 9:13
[19] John 10:14
[20] Luke 15:4
[21] Luke 15:22-24
[22] Matthew 12:17-21; Isaiah 42:1-8

[illegible] but that it be kindled?"[illegible] With pleasure He shares His bread with sinners and sits down to table with them. "As He was sitting at meat in the house of Matthew, behold many publicans and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples."[illegible] Energetically does He defend them from the maligners. "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill. [illegible] then and learn what this means: I will have mercy and not sacrifice."[illegible]

When to man's puny heart it seems already much to pardon a brother seven times, "Lord, how often shall my brother offend against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times?"[illegible] the Heart of Jesus replies: "I say not to you, till seven times, but till seventy times seven times."[illegible] Jesus forgives again and again. Never a reproof, never a reproach for guilt. "Woman, where are they that accused you? Has no man condemned you? Neither will I condemn you. Go, and now sin no more."[illegible] Never does Jesus withhold His divine favors from a repentant sinner. Even though Peter denied Him, he nevertheless receives the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Paul, the persecutor, becomes the apostle of nations; the great sinner in the Gospel is rescued from the street and becomes a saint; thus it is true that "there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that does penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."

[illegible]
Matthew [illegible]
Matthew [illegible] Jones 6:6
[illegible] Matthew [illegible]
Matthew [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

Sister Consolata's mission is precisely this: to point out to the world how tender is the mercy of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, first to her Brothers and Sisters whom she has spiritually adopted, and then to all souls. She can demonstrate not only with words but with facts how much Jesus has done in her own soul to make her one of the finest products of His grace.

She modeled her heart upon that of Jesus and always felt a lively compassion for poor sinners and an ardent desire to lead them all back to the Heart of God.

At times Jesus pours out His heart to me and laments over some soul. When I then persuade Him that matters are not really so bad and I make indulgent excuses, I feel within me that Jesus brightens up and is content, and I end up by praying for that soul. The Heart of Jesus is like a mother's. When a mother is overcome by some sorrow which an ungrateful son has caused her and confides it to a close friend, and when the latter then puts her son in a better light, the mother feels that her friend has not thought as she thought, but that her son was good. She has need to think and believe as that was. A mother's heart is thus a weak reflection of the Divine Heart. A mother however is unable to transform the heart of an ungrateful son, whereas Jesus will if we but ask Him: convert the unfaithful soul who wounds His Heart."

Thus she wrote on December 5th, 1935. Two days later as though to prove to her that such thoughts came from Him and corresponded to the goodness of His Divine Heart, Jesus Himself confirmed them almost verbatim:

A true mother will not consider her child bad, no matter how much it may be said to her it is always lovely and its faults remain in her innermost heart. That is precisely the way My Heart feels toward souls, though they be ugly, cold, bitter. My Love covers them always, beautifies. I suffer when their ugliness is confirmed to Me, on the other hand, I rejoice when in contrary

with My parental sentiments someone dissuades Me about them and says to Me that it is not true and that they are the beautiful children Mine for them have given an My Blood.

Now do you understand how much My parental Heart is wounded by even severe judgment, reprimand, or condemnation even though based on truth and how much comfort on the other hand it derives Me by even an act of compassion, indulgence and mercy. You must never judge anyone, never say a harsh word against someone, instead console My Heart, distract Me from My sorrow, wipe My tears, make Me see only the good side of a given situation, believe me, and then I will hear your prayer in her favor and will grant it. If you only knew how I suffer when I must take severe justice. You see, My Heart needs to be comforted. It is a parental sense mercy, not justice.

[illegible] words may appear severe and may even cause [illegible] considered superfluous. It is not meant [illegible] Jesus as he said to us, who as such, and even [illegible] always appears beautiful when seen through the eyes of the infinite love which it has created, but [illegible] and desires to see be saved. [illegible] that He takes pleasure in being provoked [illegible] which interpose themselves between Him [illegible] excuse them and as if were [illegible] of reparation [illegible] which He [illegible] between one the other and great [illegible] Father forgive them, for they know not what they do [illegible] having in the [illegible] of the man. God has by that [illegible] revealed his

infinite happiness is always showing mercy. On the other hand, His mercy can show itself only in the face of misery — and what misery could be greater than sin?[1]

According to Saint Thomas Aquinas, sin does not destroy the "bonum naturae," so that God's image remains in man even after sin, though "obscured and disfigured." This reflection of the divine image is the open door to regeneration and the hope of pardon. It sets the light of Jesus the Saviour against the darkness of sin, and so gives a new and original concept of man.

Goodness and mercy are poured out upon all men by the Sacred Heart of Jesus, but in particular upon sinners as having the greater need: "They that are well have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."[2] That is what Jesus said in the Gospel, and He confirmed it to Sister Consolata:

Consolata, you must never forget that I always am and wish to be kind and merciful toward My creatures. The mercy which I exercise toward poor sinners is the consolation of keeping mercy for them.

Other signs of manifestations of the Sacred Heart of Jesus will be met with further on in this book, which is not a treatise of love for the poor and an invitation to love the sinners. We cannot forego insert, at this point, however, another page written was dictated by the Sacred Heart of Jesus to Sister Consolata. It will afford great comfort by reviving hope in sin

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[1] Summa Theologiae, I-II, q. 2, a. 7, and Ad 3.

[2] Mark

[illegible] and in those souls also who suffer from an excessive and at times [illegible] fear of not being able to attain to eternal salvation. This lack of Christian hope, besides being harmful to the soul, also offends the Sacred Heart of Jesus in His merciful love and His desire to save. On December 27th, [illegible], Jesus to His privileged Sister Consolata to write thus for the benefit of all souls:

Consolata, it often happens that good and pious souls, and very frequently also souls who are consecrated to Me, wound My Heart to its very depths by some deliberate phrase such as: *Who knows whether I will be saved?*

Open the Gospel and read there My promises. I promised to Me keep: *I will give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish for ever, and no man shall pluck them out of My Hand.* Do you understand, Consolata? No one can take a soul from Me. Now read on: *That which My Father has given Me is greater than all, and no man can snatch them out of the Hand of My Father.* Do you understand, Consolata? No one can snatch a soul from Me. In an eternity they will not perish, because I give them eternal life. It was from Me I spoken these words. It was for Me I keep for all souls. It is then the issue: *Who knows whether souls be saved?* I have given assurances in the Gospel that no one can pluck a soul from Me and that I will give that soul eternal life, and to the soul eternal peace. Believe Me, Consolata, into hell go only those who really want to go there, for through no one can snatch a soul from Me, the soul must, through the free will granted her, flee from Me, must refuse Me, deny Me, and so go to Satan. It is her own selection. [illegible] I instead, if wounding My Heart with such distrust, who

[illegible]

[illegible] "will have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" [1 Timothy 2:4].

would give a little more thought to the heaven which awaits you. I did not create you for hell but for Heaven, not as a companion for the demons but as mine. My infinite love [illegible] I have never consented to hell go only those who wish to go there. How foolish is your fear of being damned! After having shed My Blood in order to save your soul, after having surrounded your soul with graces upon graces all through your entire existence, would I permit Satan My worst enemy to rob Me of that soul at the last moment of her life, not when I am about to gather in the fruit of the Redemption and when therefore that soul is on the point of loving Me forever. Would I do that when on the cross I gave promises to give the soul eternal life and that no one can snatch her from My Hands? Consolata, how is it possible to believe such a monstrosity?

You see, final impenitence is found only in a soul who purposely wishes to go to hell and therefore obstinately refuses My mercy, for I never refuse to pardon anyone, after the gift of My Immense compassion to all. not My House was built for all. No! It is not the multiplicity of sins which [illegible] [illegible] I forgive everything, the reason that is the obstinacy that wishing to be pardoned, it wishing to be damned." A human in the [illegible] had only one single act of faith in Me but [illegible] he was pardoned in an instant. However, and on the very day of his

[illegible] be excessive and unjustified [illegible] connection opposed [illegible]

[illegible] makes men equal in [illegible] human [illegible]

repentance he entered into My kingdom and is a saint. *Behold the* [illegible] *of My mercy* and *of faith in Me*.

[illegible] Consolation. *My Father, who has given Me the souls, is greater and more powerful than all the demons. No one can snatch souls from the Hand of My Father!*

[illegible] confidence in Me [illegible]. Me always. You [illegible] influence that I can [illegible] all the great promises which I have made you for your [illegible] immensely kind and merciful. [illegible] not the wrath of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his ways and live.*

[illegible] impressed [illegible] the part [illegible] the sinner [illegible] that is [illegible] conversion. [illegible] and [illegible] truth is expressed [illegible] the [illegible] responsibility of the new and original sense of God's doctrine about man.

[illegible] I was [illegible] not [illegible] quote from [illegible] 35.

[illegible] at Maguns I was deeply impressed by the passage in the Gospel concerning the man who had planted a fig [illegible]. I opened the passage upon returning to [illegible] and read [illegible] I [illegible] I [illegible] I [illegible] I [illegible] and my own [illegible] [illegible]

* Luke 1[illegible]
* Luke 13:6-9

[illegible] and did not dare raise my eyes to heaven, and more [illegible] everything seemed [illegible] lost. What an hour of [illegible] and anguish! Who could offer up to praise that instant? What would a promise when each new day merely proved my own inherent [illegible]. At last I gathered all my strength [illegible] and cried out [illegible] place my trust in Jesus. And behold, a message appeared to span the heart of Jesus. [illegible] this poor creature with his supreme [illegible] above all her angers [illegible] and weaknesses. [illegible] the gracious wings of love [illegible] and parts [illegible]

Sister Consolata had the same experience again during the Holy Hour on the night preceding the first Friday of [illegible] [illegible] approached [illegible] the tabernacle and read: "You Lord have [illegible] yourself without reserve and [illegible] [illegible] I was a [illegible] [illegible] I have been [illegible] by [illegible] the Heart of Jesus showers upon me. [illegible] that a [illegible] creature [illegible] Jesus [illegible] Ah! how have I [illegible] My [illegible] in keeping silence appeared to me [illegible] I was not loving God without reserve [illegible] everything [illegible] [illegible] the Heart of Jesus which [illegible] [illegible] Wait! Jesus is waiting for that [illegible] Peace [illegible]

[illegible]

Sister Consolata also had to pass through other no less painful trials, since she had offered herself to suffer hell upon earth in order to save her poor Brothers from eternal damnation. But she was heroically able to keep true to her vow which the Divine Father had one day asked of her in preparation as it were for the great assaults which awaited her. (October 8th, 1934)

I honour God with your confidence. Swear to Me that you will always believe, no matter in what state your soul may find herself, that there is a heaven open to you.

She had asked on several occasions received a formal promise from Jesus that she would go directly to heaven without passing through purgatory. Thus, on September 4th, 1935:

So Consolata, we will not go to purgatory, we will pass from the cell to paradise?

A few days earlier, in response to her tears on this point because of [illegible] she has for sinners:

Listen, Consolata: if the good thief, in addition to all his own bad deeds, committed all your faults, do you suppose I would have changed My verdict?

Oh no, Jesus. You would have said just the same: 'Today you shall be with Me in paradise.'

I will then, some evening, I will say the same words to you.'

TRUST IN LOVE

[illegible] is the flower of Christian hope,[1] for not only does it make us strive with a happy spirit toward the heavenly fatherland, but it makes us proceed with speed and without

1. [illegible] presupposes a certain vigor in hoping. Summa Theologiae II

hate not on the path to holiness. Love and confidence are these two the wings with which the soul undertakes the most daring flights and metamorphosis gains every height. The influence wanes then love also languishes and the soul merely drags herself along. In fact lack of faith is the greatest obstacle to the divine workings in a soul outside of self seeking.

In most cases we lack trust in God because we have too much confidence in ourselves. Then when the soul experiences her own inability to do good she grieves her God the cause and is greatly perturbed. The very opposite ought to be the case. It is because of this very weakness that the infant has the right to be sustained by his mother and the same thing happens in the spiritual life. It is our own extreme weakness which gives us the right to count on God's strength. Our nothingness needs are what attract the tender Heart of Jesus. That is an important point in the matter. In sum, for our every imperfection whether [illegible] we ever higher. A soul who does not trust [illegible] and at every angle who has [illegible] a lack of confidence in God. Sinners are welcome as the heart of God.

This is the reason why we find the phrase "honor God with your confidence" repeated several times by Sister the Father and by Jesus in their conversations with Sister [illegible] on the 25th September [illegible] in the [illegible] of Jesus.

[illegible] Jesus the fact that You speak to my poor soul that You weigh [illegible] of my soul ought to be the greatest [illegible] of my heart by reason of [illegible] that [illegible] to me as a mere [illegible] has a [illegible] secrets is so great. There is really nothing that [illegible] attract Your divine glance toward me and because [illegible] because that a doubt is sometimes born within me and I do not perhaps [illegible] deceived? Jesus, forgive me. Yes, I do believe that You are with the gentleness. Jesus, [illegible]

Look! Consolatrix, your poverty is limited, but My love has no limits.

A few days later, on September 14th, 1935, she exclaimed: "O Jesus, that You could love the white and spotless lilies, that I can believe, but that You should love me — that I cannot understand!" And Jesus:

If you will remember that I did not come for the just but for sinners, you will understand at once, Consolatrix!

One evening, she writes, was desolate and was sobbing before the tabernacle. "Oh, Jesus, am always the same, promise, and then . . ." And He replies:

Yes, I am always the same and never change. But He said this in such a tone that my desolation was changed into joy. If He was not grieved, why then should I be so distressed?

This reminder of the immutability of God stresses the need for unstable and unstable creatures to have a sound and permanent support.

[illegible] was never permitted Sister [illegible] to brood over her own failings. On November 2nd, 1935, He told her:

If you should happen to commit some fault, do not grieve over it, but come and place it quickly within My Heart, then strengthen your determination to strive for the opposite virtue, but with great calmness. In that manner your every fault will become a step on advance.[44]

With great calmness — but the enemy is astute and proceeds [illegible] to a tactical plan. If he is able to discourage a

[illegible]

[44] See Psalm 101:28; Hebrews 1:12.

[illegible]

soul with the poison of diffidence, or is well satisfied for the rest with love in itself. The soul will come to be perturbed, and that is fatal to it, as Jesus explained to Sister Consolata on

August 2nd, 1936

If the soul can keep calm, then she will remain master of herself; but if she is perturbed, then it is easy for her to fall.

Having noted that Jesus permitted everything except disquiet in her soul, Sister Consolata one day asked him for the reason. He gave me to understand that a great fire would make a spring of fresh water, pure and limpid, at which He can quench His thirst whenever He wishes; but if disquiet enters, then that soul, or rather that water, becomes agitated as though a stick had stirred up the muddy bottom, and then He cannot quench His thirst from it.

Not only that, but the devil gets to fish in troubled waters and hide that state of the soul, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Jesus forewarned Sister Consolata on

on September 24th, 1936:

Never let yourself become perturbed, never, never! For when you become perturbed, the devil is content. Then he can do what he desires.

This threefold "never" was a confirmation of the words ofence which her spiritual director had imposed upon her. In her great longing for perfection she was often tempted to scrupulosity. Jesus encourages her explicitly:

Nevertheless, you are obliged under obedience never, never, never to be sorry you become perturbed. That is for you the most important thing!

We must never lose confidence, hence we must take care not to become troubled. In fact, once we become perturbed, it [illegible] [illegible] that we become discouraged, and when we are discouraged, we do not continue to be faithful. Therefore we do not advance a [illegible] but are [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] Sister Consolata writes:

[illegible]

"I like the second one better."

[illegible]

[illegible] lowing invaluable advice

[illegible]

[illegible] *great suffering!*

[illegible]

[illegible] See Luke 18:16.

[illegible] the darkness in an instant but little by little. A [illegible] heaven is always more [illegible] the soul, the house of the body, arrive at a gallop, but depart slowly, step by step."[illegible]

Jesus was also addressing those who, after having made some progress in the way of perfection and thinking themselves invulnerable, will have an experience of what human frailty is when, with God's permission, the enemy attacks unexpectedly and [illegible] violence. As Saint Francis de Sales puts it: "[illegible] that a proud servant who, of a sudden, becomes the mistress is a very insolent creature. There is great danger that a soul who has for a long time been a slave to her passions [illegible] and, [illegible] mistress, [illegible] be [illegible]."[illegible] That is the right moment to gaze [illegible] the [illegible] of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Such [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] as abuse.

[illegible] *the enemy and make every effort to hide* [illegible] *with us. No, you must never forget that I am God* [illegible] *understand My Heart* [illegible] *understand My Love, and never permit the enemy to gain entrance into your soul, even for an instant, with a thought of hatred or revenge. Believe Me, I am gentle and humble of heart. I am* [illegible] *like a parent to you.*[illegible] *Imitate therefore the kid* [illegible] *the wrath of the hunter, run to mother* [illegible] *and remain* [illegible] *repose your imperfections and*

[illegible] *Introduction to the Devout Life*, chapter 5

[illegible] *Letter to a Lady*, Coll. Blanc, 825 0

[illegible] power, goodness, and faithfulness

[illegible] the mother will always handicap the child. Bigger [illegible] seems to be unimportant. And if the child were to [illegible] his arm or his head, how tenderly and affectionately would he be cared for and handicap [illegible] the mother. [illegible] the very same with regard to your son when you [illegible] though [illegible] science. Do you understand [illegible] Therefore [illegible] never [illegible] of [illegible] of confidence towards [illegible] heart to the quick and makes [illegible] feel.

[illegible] Sister [illegible] her [illegible] would never permit her [illegible] grave [illegible]

"No, my dear, I will not let you break your arm or your neck. But then you must just know that what [illegible] now [illegible] use to other ones. [illegible] wise it all down.

[illegible] Sister [illegible] the [illegible] exempt [illegible] and the truth is not [illegible]." Sister [illegible] have had defects we [illegible] not and she try [illegible] them but rather took delight in exposing them. Hers were mostly external faults as where is her [illegible] for the observance of the rule, a sudden [illegible] escaped her. But how we [illegible] faults on the [illegible] that when they happened [illegible] incident a [illegible] with [illegible] that she was [illegible] [illegible] her [illegible] the last [illegible] towards [illegible] her [illegible] after every unpremeditated utterance she has immediately or

[illegible] and [illegible] with a sincere resolve to amend.

[illegible] must also be noted that [illegible] such de- [illegible] are [illegible] used by God to [illegible] His gifts and workings [illegible] from the eyes of others. [illegible] Norwich [illegible] lead them to [illegible] God [illegible] on those [illegible] something [illegible] in His own [illegible] them [illegible] with [illegible] abundance [illegible] pleased He [illegible]

[illegible] read you made sorrows and humiliations.

What were these humiliations? [illegible] that she appeared [illegible] in the eyes [illegible] others, but even of her [illegible] responding [illegible] Gertrude had [illegible]

[illegible] advantageous to her [illegible] graces that [illegible] preserve her [illegible] from the [illegible] I must [illegible] her own eyes under the [illegible] of these [illegible]

[illegible] are [illegible] facts which are [illegible] known, but which are [illegible] We forget them [illegible] regard and [illegible] disturbed and [illegible] when we appear [illegible] and [illegible]

[illegible] that [illegible] ready [illegible] who are aflame with

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Revelations of Divine Love, chapter 28.

[illegible] Cros, S.J., *The Heart of St Gertrude*

a Jesuit [illegible] who measure and [illegible] each step for fear of falling. The saints were not timorous or meticulous but audacious performers; we do not call them presumptuous but audacious; they did not lose themselves in futile discussions but aimed at the essential point. Those who never give battle, says Saint John Chrysostom, never suffer a wound; it is the ones who throw themselves forward for the enemy who often get wounded.

This digression was necessary, for it is most important that souls and directors of souls should not overlook the essential for the sake of the accessory. Jesus! Note how Jesus comforted His patient and exhortation and encouraged [illegible]

You wished to have Me promise that I would never let you [illegible] but always to remain in [illegible] perfect [illegible] I do not wish to decide anything and therefore I [illegible] with your [illegible] imperfections and these [illegible] in advance for they will cause you to make many acts of humility.

Saint Francis de Sales wrote: "[illegible] imperfections which [illegible] us to know our own weakness and we [illegible] to practice humility and contempt [illegible]

But what is easier for a soul [illegible] than when she [illegible] spiritual larks [illegible] consolations and for that danger Jesus therefore forewarns her in these words on November 27th, 1933:

[illegible]

[illegible] Coll. Blue Letter 88

[illegible]

may find yourself

[illegible] said just that. The magnificent [illegible] and even in reasons [illegible] the Blessed [illegible] placed [illegible] heavens. Mother [illegible]

confidence

[illegible]

[illegible] at the service of the creature. This has [illegible] her

August [illegible] 1935 *Do you know what drawS Me to your soul? It is the blind faith which you have in Me.*

[illegible] 1935 *The blind creature's faith which you have in Me pleases Me greatly, and it is on that account that I bend down to you with so much love and with such* **tenderness**

Because of that confidence I will [illegible] **upon marvel**

[illegible] 1935 *I will work wonders in you, because your trust in Me has no obstacles. You believe in Jesus and in His merciful Heart. Everything is possible to him who believes.*

Because of that confidence He will bring her to the height **of sanctity**

[illegible] 1935 *If you had trusted in yourself, or had trusted in creatures, you would have gone the wrong way, and you would have advanced [illegible] true way, which is Me. You are sustained in the strength and I will work marvels. We will make gigantic [illegible]*

Because of this trust He will pour the treasures of His di**vine Heart into her soul**

[illegible] place no limits on your confidence in Me, then I will place no limits on My graces for you.

And because [illegible] He [illegible] **plained to her**

[illegible]

[illegible] has deigned to take a [illegible] and make of her an apostle of the [illegible] which one should have in God. He will also arm her [illegible] that [illegible] such fortitude as to enable her to walk [illegible] and bring her victorious to the longed-for goal.

[illegible] November [illegible] 1935, He reassured her concerning the trials which awaited her:

[illegible] [illegible] speech [illegible] for I am with you, and you must [illegible] completely in your [illegible]. I promise [illegible] what I will be able to make [illegible] nothing and [illegible] with you. He is thinking of you [illegible] like the pupil of His eye. I promise that you will [illegible] the designs which Jesus has [illegible] you. He [illegible] in Me, and in her faith shall [illegible] [illegible] only knew how much pleasure that gives Me [illegible] to trust [illegible] the shadow of death. Never have fear of anything! [illegible] completely and [illegible] that when [illegible] then repeat with even greater ardor [illegible] longer I have, I trust longer. In all my trials I placed [illegible] must act in every trial. Your trust in Me is [illegible] in the days of trial [illegible] heroic.

[illegible] was for the [illegible] experiences of [illegible] summary she considered these [illegible] them in their entirety.

M[illegible] that you have [illegible] have kept [illegible] what [illegible] what [illegible] but my

---

[illegible] John 7:18

Jesus, I do not wish to see more or even angels. In this moment my wish is to see with Your eyes, to battle, persevere in the fight so that, to the point of death, I can say, like Saint Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

I know that a contrite and humbled heart, Jesus, You will not despise; awaits the crown promised to those who struggle with the thoughts I have mentioned. My mind, my tongue, and my heart give You the response of supreme effort and the energies that You are increasingly asking of me. I see Your more [illegible] and have a generous, ready heart for every request, and I know that Satan's hate will seize every opportunity to hinder or stop the [illegible] ascent toward You.

Therefore, the decisive battle is joined against myself, the creature, the enemy of Jesus. I am not aware of any [illegible] one, whether sooner or later, is overcome by Your love, or the moment after he has gone astray, or in the end. "If God is for me, who can be against me?"[illegible]

So, Jesus, I desire that in this moment [illegible] the thoughts of discouragement or little trust should not [illegible] me. O Jesus, I wish to begin an [illegible] as soon as I awake and be intense in spite of all enemies attempting to [illegible] my sleep at night. O Jesus, awake with Your help. I desire to see You [illegible] with You to serve You [illegible] evening. My Jesus, I wish to pray with a [illegible] to You [illegible] with a sincere [illegible] the present moment [illegible] Your [illegible] My [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] See Romans 8:3

[illegible]

[illegible]

Sacred Heart of Jesus She writes

[illegible]

[illegible] strength in my ultimate weakness.

Just what were these immense desires which Christ speaks and what divine promises were involved? It appears that she [illegible] the height of her confidence by maintaining ever more [illegible] despite of everything her faith [illegible] her own [illegible] and [illegible] quote [illegible] of her letters to her spiritual [illegible] dated

September 10th, 1942

[illegible] as he [illegible] to [illegible] Him. What [illegible] Father. [illegible] that [illegible] a [illegible] grant me [illegible] desire.

[illegible] gives me his grace [illegible] Him so [illegible] astonished and [illegible] could not [illegible] myself in his state. [illegible] asking [illegible] upon myself [illegible] what [illegible] grant me [illegible] Christ [illegible] Him [illegible] grant me [illegible] seem to me [illegible] that [illegible] started [illegible]

[illegible] making the Way

[illegible] look up at the stars and think of what the saints may be saying about my sister's prayer for so high a degree of love, of suffering, and for souls. It only came from an innocent and faithful heart, but from Consolata. However, the challenge has now been offered by an audacious confidence which hopes to obtain it. To him who believes everything is possible. And Consolata does believe! O Father, faith seems to have grown great in me, so great that [illegible] to [illegible] and I pray one to increase it still further. I [illegible] that a bridge has been thrown across from his maiden [illegible] to God in confidence.

[illegible] enthusiastic and loving confidence explains the promise Jesus made to many times to this dear soul:

Consolata, within the bosom of the Church, you will be Confidence.

[illegible] and [illegible] what [illegible] the reasons in the [illegible] [illegible] that [illegible] which really [illegible] the soul to the [illegible] virtues and sacrifices [illegible] every weakness of human nature.

BE IN LOVE WITH LOVE

[illegible] which the soul must be thoroughly [illegible] make progress in the [illegible] that [illegible] poor creatures [illegible] that an [illegible] between Creator and [illegible] be summed up in the words of Saint Paul: He [illegible] this relationship between Creator and

* Colossians 2:2

creature expressed in this other passage from the Gospel: "[illegible] shall love the Lord your God [illegible]." Love must be that a creature can give him as already [illegible] and he can ask it back even to ultimate [illegible]. But not so in love here on earth: the creature is free to refuse it. But God insists [illegible] asks for [illegible] that was the purpose of the creation of man. As Saint Thomas puts [illegible] God's [illegible] and attitude [illegible] as the best [illegible] from the observance of which depends the [illegible] demands all of it. He wants it [illegible] with all the heart [illegible] the whole soul [illegible] the whole mind and with all one's strength. And in order to gain this [illegible] sublime, but [illegible] made Himself man [illegible] a beggar at the feet of the creature [illegible] Me to drink." And in the end [illegible] divine longing: "I thirst."[illegible]

[illegible] gentle [illegible] the revelations of Saint Margaret Mary. [illegible] and in these latter times it has been [illegible] numerous manifestations such as the [illegible] centers around the life and teaching of the "true lover." And yet how [illegible] who sincerely desire [illegible] wandering restless and lamentable [illegible] are [illegible] longing [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] in some way [illegible] who knows what a [illegible] as though [illegible] kingdom were [illegible] more to [illegible] than for our [illegible]

[illegible] From Sister Consolata Jesus asked only love [illegible] although he [illegible] to one of the most severely [illegible] souls [illegible] the rest. The expressions: "Love Me [illegible] Me [illegible] Me [illegible] Me for my [illegible] I ask [illegible] [illegible] are [illegible] repeated [illegible] times in the pages of her [illegible] [illegible] the divine interrogations. It [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] satisfaction by the creature who thirsts for [illegible] [illegible] He does not hide it among the greater part. It manifests nor does He even receive it as its entirely from [illegible] souls [illegible] [illegible] souls who better understand the [illegible] of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and who [illegible] to [illegible] Sister Consolata on October 5th, [illegible]

[illegible] *innocent heart, in the heart of [illegible] [illegible] give Me all thee love.*

[illegible] such as these [illegible] the [illegible] would [illegible] be [illegible] with

love (October 18th, 1935)

[illegible] *love Me on behalf of each and every one of My [illegible] each and every heart that exists. [illegible] so much for love.*

[illegible] who [illegible] that the [illegible] for the [illegible] [illegible] November 4th, 1935

[illegible] *[illegible] your [illegible] a pain had [illegible] for a spring of fresh water.*

[illegible] for love [illegible] to Sister

Consolata on November 3rd, 1935

[illegible] *[illegible] under [illegible] but for me [illegible] love from you [illegible]*

[illegible] what [illegible] November [illegible]

935

[illegible] when you love. We continuously [illegible] heaven in your heart!

According to the teaching of [illegible] Scripture [illegible] the Church Fathers and of theology, even a soul who is in a state of grace is [illegible] in comparison with the heavenly and what they [illegible] say [illegible] who not [illegible] St. Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque

My daughter, the desires of your heart please Me [illegible] growth that [illegible] had not already [illegible] My [illegible] sacrament [illegible] I would [illegible] for love of you [illegible] have the pleasure of [illegible]

And now on October 2 [illegible] 5 [illegible] Saint [illegible]

[illegible] comparison or [illegible] Mother [illegible] I had to [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] Mary [illegible] your treasure. For the heart [illegible] about [illegible] your heart [illegible] Mary [illegible]

Now we [illegible] understand the [illegible] that Saint [illegible] shows [illegible] her [illegible] as [illegible] with [illegible] of the [illegible] world. Thus [illegible]

[illegible] which [illegible] purification [illegible] human [illegible] for the example of Mary [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] because [illegible] [illegible] make [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible] and prophets. If mercy out of revolting and [illegible] [illegible] from Me now the triumph of My love over you and over every soul which is now on earth or who will ever exist until the end of time. By means of increasing prayer prepare for the triumph of My Heart and of My love throughout the earth.

At other times Jesus reiterated the same idea and quoted the words of the Divine Prisoner of Jesus: "If only you could relate to [illegible] the expression attach[illegible]." Then He added (November 27th, 1935):

[illegible] tell the little souls tell everyone of My ineffable condescension. Tell the world how good I am how like a parent and how in return I desire only love from My creatures. You may speak of [illegible] and relate My [illegible] mercy and tireless parental condescension.

"That is the fire which Jesus came to bring upon earth and [illegible] kindle in every human heart." (December 15th, 1935):

[illegible] enter into every heart and pour into My tender [illegible] now Me on behalf of all and through your prayer and your immolation prepare the world for the coming of My love!

Jesus therefore desires to save the world. But the world must first turn back to Jesus. With Him there is peace in the [illegible] without Him anarchy and ruin. And how does one return to Jesus? There is only one way for souls as well as for nations now. But is one whole if they saw the whole [illegible] Saint Francis or Saint [illegible] the [illegible] of an [illegible] transformed into [illegible] earnest the appearance of a Paul an Anthony a Hilarion a Francis without the use of books or teachers. The salvation lies in the building of

[illegible] Anthony [illegible] Hilarion [illegible] Francis of Assisi

this one precept which embraces God and neighbor. "This do and you shall live."[34] Protestantism on the one hand and Jansenism on the other have, during these last centuries, extinguished little by little this sacred fire within the heart of Christianity and have killed it in many souls. The death mask of a Christianity which has been reduced to simple faith or fear has congealed the hearts, has driven them away from God, and has carried them progressively to indifferentism, skepticism, atheism, and paganism.

In order to return to Jesus, it is necessary therefore to return to the Gospel — which Jesus Himself has placed in the bosom of the Catholic Church, and which she has constantly defended and taught, the Gospel of love and of charity.

To believe in the Gospel is to believe in love; to carry the Gospel into practice means to love.

3

THE LIFE OF LOVE AND CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

LOVE IS SANCTITY

GOD ALONE KNOWS how many holy souls there are within the bosom of the Church Militant, but this much is certain: not a few Christians hold the belief that sanctity is to be found exclusively in the cloister, or at least that sanctity is something reserved for a few privileged souls who receive like some free gift from heaven which they merely need to accept. Such a way of thinking is not only erroneous but harmful, for it tends to keep souls in a state of spiritual inertia and mediocrity which is not at all befitting to one who professes himself to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

The vocation to sanctity is open to all Christians without distinction, for all are members of one and the same Mystical Body. If the Head is holy, then also the members. When Jesus says in the Gospel, "Be you therefore perfect as also your heavenly Father is perfect,"[1] He is addressing all His followers. When Saint Paul writes, "This is the will of God, your sanctification,"[2] it is again meant for all Christians.

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[1] Matthew 5:48

[2] 1 Thessalonians 4:3

If God desires us to be holy, He will, without the slightest doubt, also increase the graces needed for us to attain sanctity. All that Jesus has done for us or has given to us is intended not only for our salvation but for our sanctification. It is precisely the desire, the joy, we might almost say the ambition, of Jesus to see us holy. He confirmed this to Sister Consolata when He said:

If you only knew what joy it gives Me to sanctify a soul! Every soul ought to become holy in order to procure Me this pleasure. Would you like to have a faint idea of it? Then think of the joy which a mother feels when she sees her son return radiant with his well-earned diploma: the happiness of that mother is indescribable. Well, My felicity in seeing a soul attain sanctity vastly exceeds that faint comparison.

Here again Jesus is speaking of all souls.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that Christians should be well informed on this point. Why should we hesitate to speak about holiness, or why be afraid to aspire to it, if that is the very duty of every Christian? The important thing is to form a correct concept regarding holiness, so as not to go wrong in practice and achieve little or nothing under the impression of achieving much. Nor ought we to shrink from so noble an undertaking on account of our own meanness and weakness.

When speaking of sanctity and saints, it is a mistake to lay stress on the extraordinary and freely given gifts or graces (gratis datae), and Jesus expressly so declared to Sister Consolata, as we have seen. It is also wrong to stress extraordinary penances, austerities, and the like, as though the first and great commandment of the Law, and hence the first and foremost duty of the Christian, were the mortification of his own body, rather than the love of God and of his neighbor.

No, there is no need to misinterpret the Gospel or to re

duce the saints of Christianity a must to the level of a sect of flagellants by not accentuating that inner union with God that love, from which all works, and especially all virtues, draw their worth and perfection. The Gospel is not a message of sadness but rather one of joy, beginning with the joyous announcement of the angels at Bethlehem and ending with the angels' triumphant words at the empty tomb of Jesus. Who could assert that Our Lord Jesus Christ, Who follows the pure and chaste joys of life which His love has strewn along the path, intersperses with sorrows. And are not the daily sacrifices transfigured in the light of Christian hope? We have already encountered in this message a number of hints in that direction, and we will encounter are still others.

Weakened by a bad case of influenza, Sister Consolata one day supported herself on the choir stall and then even sat down in choir, a thing she never did at other times for the sake of mortification. She regretted it later, however, and asked pardon of Jesus, but He replied:

Be at peace, Consolata, do not make Me out to be a severe Person. Jesus, who, seen the raven to awaken your Father Francis belatedly one morning solely because he had had little sleep during the night, can also grant permission to one of His creatures to support herself or sit down in choir because she is suffering from influenza. Do you not understand that Jesus is goodness, mercy and indulgence itself?

Sister Consolata was very much attached to observations of the conventual life, also in the matter of food. But she possessed and gladly denied herself those things which the community allowed of its weaker members, and she never wished to vary from that rule of hers, not even when she was physically sad, low and ailing. Jesus taught her a beautiful lesson in connection with this point on September 24th, 1946:

Remember, Consolata, that I am kind, do not distort this face

I to see the world often to represent sanctity by pictures of austerities, flagellations, chains. But it is not like that. If sacrifice and penance do enter into the life of a saint, they are not on that account the whole of his life. The saint, or the soul who gives herself to Me with generosity, is the most fortunate being on earth, for I am kind, altogether kind.

Never lose sight of the fact that the Jesus whom you behold dying on the Cross at the end of His mortal career is the same Jesus who for thirty years hurried the life which is common to all men in the bosom of His own family, and He is the same Jesus who all during His three years' ministry sat down to table with men who feasted in their banquets. And Jesus was such a mortal, the holiest of all men. Therefore, do not misrepresent Me to your mind, but remember that Jesus is always kind to you. He is and ever will be paternal tenderness itself until the very end of your life.

I love the fidelity with which you are keeping your promise. Yes, you have your confidence in My paternal goodness, and you trust Me. You will make exceptions when there is a real need for it. Remember, and never forget, Jesus is kind. Do not thus represent Me!

No, it is not really a case of imparting something which might serve to sanctify the soul, but everything has its proper place and everything has its proper value in the order of sanctification. In fact, in the Gospel Jesus, as in His total, wants to sanctify and gives them as an example of sanctity, there which necessarily [illegible] the single sanctity for all [illegible] may be attainable by all. There are various ways leading to it, however, according to the diverse conditions of people and the various designs which God has for souls.

Sanctity consists essentially in love, for that is what unites the soul to the fountain of all sanctity — Jesus Christ. While He does not require the same sacrifices in the same measure from all, He does desire to be loved by all, and not only that, but to

be loved with all the heart, with all the mind, with one's whole soul, and with one's whole strength. He requires this total love from everyone by a definite commandment which is the very essence of the entire Law. Therefore, when a soul gives Him this all, she is holy, and she is holy in the measure in which she loves Him to the exclusion of all else, and thus, as we shall see, she can only achieve by renouncing everything which is opposed to perfect love.[3]

Jesus taught Sister Consolata on December 16th, 1935:

Tell all souls, Consolata, that I prefer an act of love and a Communion of love to any other gift which they may offer Me. Yes, an act of love is better than the discipline, for I thirst for love. Poor souls! They think that in order to reach Me it is necessary to live an austere penitential life. See how they misrepresent Me! They make Me out as one to be feared, whereas I am kindness itself! See how they forget the precept which I have given them, the very essence of the entire Law: You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole soul.

Today, as yesterday and tomorrow, I ask only and always for love from My poor creatures!

Ah, if a Christians would only understand more deeply the spirit of the Gospel, how much more easily and happily they would put it into practice in their daily lives! Love in return for love, that is everything!

INTIMATE LIFE OF LOVE WITH JESUS

The scope and fruit of a life of love is, therefore, the union of the soul with Jesus for the attainment of sanctity. This is the treasure of which the Gospel speaks that the man discovered.

for its sake he sold all his possessions and bought the field in which it was hidden. This precious field is equanimity, and to gain it one must divest oneself of everything by a rigorous mortification of the heart and of the senses, both internal and external.

Not everyone can understand this language, in fact there are relatively few souls even among the dedicated ones who succeed in discovering this treasure. Or if they have caught a glimpse of it, they do not consummate possession of it because they will not impose upon themselves the necessary renunciation. They could be reaping a divine and austerely fruitful life but instead they stop short at the threshold of the King's palace and settle down to a way of life which is little more than mediocre, or at least is far removed from that perfection to which they are consecrated.

[illegible] the King of Love gives all, but He also demands all: every heartbeat, every thought of the mind, every reaction of the senses, and every capacity of the soul. When He places no limits on His gifts or on His giving of Himself, the soul is as it were absorbed into Him and lives and works in Him in so intimate an harmony of affections and intentions as is found only among the citizens of heaven.

Every request for love which Our Lord made to Sister Consolata aimed precisely at this: to bring her to an actual living, intimate and stable union with Himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that as Jesus insists He demanded ever more and in the end permitted her no voluntary distractions.

Do not turn your glance away from Jesus for any reason whatsoever, then you will reach the eternal shores more rapidly. (August 8th, 1935)

He desired to see her perfect in everything, but especially so on this point from which the virtues derive their perfection.

I desire you to be perfect, I want you continually with Me

Therefore, Jesus said: I alone suffice for everything. You trust Me, do you not? (October 7th, 1935)

He did not segregate her physically from other creatures. On the contrary, He always demanded from her a perfect communicativeness in everything, including recreation; nevertheless, she had to see to it that always and everywhere her mind and her heart were not distracted from Jesus.

Do you know what I desire from you? Continuous intimacy without even an instant's distraction, always united with Me, even when you must converse with creatures. (August 8th, 1936)

One day she left the door to her cell open in order to have a little more air, and so she was observed at her work. Jesus told her:

Consolata, close the door of your cell to every earthly sound and leave only the window open to all that is heavenly.

A similar exhortation was given her about the door of the senses which is more dangerous and delicating:

Just as you close the door of your cell for solitude's sake, so you must also close every door to the senses. Let us always live in intimacy, you and I alone. Cut off the entrance to every thought, to everything. Just the two of us alone, always. (October 29th, 1935)

Thus intimately united to the Saint of Saints, the soul will advance on the road to sanctity with sure and rapid strides. Of course she will still have to force herself to respond always to the actions of grace and particularly to be faithful to her resolutions which actually make grace operative. This is what Jesus told Sister Consolata on June 23rd, 1935:

I am always faithful to My promises. If you remain always in Me, you too will remain faithful to what you have promised and resolved, for what is found in the vine is also found in the branch.

Not only does Jesus grant the soul fidelity to her resolutions, but He pours into all the virtues which in Him are found

[illegible] is united with Him

If you are in Me and we are one, then you will bring forth much fruit and will become strong, for you will disappear like a drop of water in the ocean. My silence will pass into you, and My humility, My purity, My charity, My gentleness, My patience, My strength for suffering, and My zeal for souls whom I wish to save at all cost. August [illegible], [illegible]

A restless soul or heart will always seek what is [illegible] and will never rest until the soul possesses peace of heart, with the possessions of Jesus which are [illegible]. Many times he takes that [illegible] repeated to Sister Consolata, while exhorting her to that intimate union with Himself.

All that is Mine is yours, Consolata. Not only all virtues but also Me, words, My thoughts, and therefore also My suffering and My love!

[illegible] heart of saint [illegible] and it is also [illegible] at [illegible] and virtues are [illegible] and [illegible]

Since you are longing to love Me and to [illegible] for Me, dwell in Me, [illegible] or work, also during recreation. [illegible] not leave Me for an instant. *There you will hear much truth,* [illegible] as Saint Peter. *He had been fishing all night long and had caught nothing. Together with Me, he pulled in his nets based with fish, almost as soon as he had cast them into the water.*

It will be the same with you if you never leave Me, for you are in charge. In moment you receive from Me an inspiration to mortify yourself, think and work not in response, and you are [illegible] in hand with [illegible] souls whom you will not know until you reach heaven. [illegible] (1-44)

These lessons are of value to both [illegible] and [illegible] souls. [illegible] to understand the spouse [illegible] as closely with Jesus is life foundation for sanctity and

it is precisely love which brings about such a union. Jesus once made this comment on the words of Saint John:

God is love, and he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him. "You see, I am Love, and as long as you remain in Love, you remain in Me and I also in you. Therefore, even when I am silent and when you no longer hear My voice, remember always that as long as you love Me, I am in you and you in Me. Is it not true that you die to love Me alone and always? Therefore, I remain always in you and you in Me."

Since love is the means by which we attain union with Jesus, it follows that the more perfect our love is, the more perfect will also be our union with Him.

FERVOR OF LOVE IN PURITY OF SPIRIT

In practice, such perfect love and therefore such perfect union with Jesus cannot be attained except through a three-fold virginal purity: that of mind, of speech, and of heart. Jesus indicated this when He told Sister Consolata on April 19th, 1936:

When you are praying you feel the need of being enveloped in silence, and so too, in order to be united with Me, it is necessary that a profound silence should reign in your innermost being. Any little noise distracts prayer, in a similar way, any mere trifle that distracts your attention, your fervor. Immaculateness is also required.

This immaculate purity seems to correspond to what Saint Thomas teaches: From men's affections must be excluded not

[illegible] that which is contrary to charity, but also all that which might be a hindrance to giving oneself entirely to God."

According to the divine teaching, this virginal purity comprises a threefold science: that of the thoughts (purity of mind), that of words (purity of speech), and that of interests (purity of heart). From this it can be seen that the "devotional practices" aiming perfection is anything but a playing with words. No one can make any progress in it who is not determined to sacrifice everything; no great austerities are needed, but rather a mystical crucifixion of all the senses.

First, as regards the purity of mind through a silence of thoughts: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, with your whole mind." This is not some advice given to Religious, but a command addressed to all Christians. In fact, it is the first of the commandments. Therefore, it must be carried out; God does not command the impossible, and so it must be possible to carry it out, but it must be in a varying measure according to each one's state and the grace bestowed on us, as an effort of response. In this respect, as St. Jesus demanded the highest perfection from Sister Consolata:

Consolata, you know that I love you very much. My Heart is divine, yes, but it is also human like yours, and so it longs for your love, for your every thought. I shall take care of everything, even the most minute matters, but you must think only of Me. I long for your love. You have no other thoughts, then, would be like shutting Me out. (March 24th, 1934)

The zealous which God feels towards us, writes Saint Francis de Sales, is one of supreme friendship for us: it is not His concern but our wish that we should love Him.

Summa Theologiae, II-II, 84.
Matthew 22, 37.
[illegible] Book [illegible], chapter [illegible]

Useless thoughts which are voluntarily admitted by the soul are thorns in the head of Jesus, but it requires a bitter struggle for the soul to renounce such thoughts and calls for innumerable acts of self-denial. The thorns which the soul wishes to spare Jesus must be inflicted upon herself, upon her own head.

Behold Jesus crowned with thorns! You can imitate Him in a very real manner by not permitting one other thought, nothing else to enter your mind. In that way souls are brought to salvation, and you yourself will be free to love. (August [illegible] 1935)

This is not a passing crown of thorns but a lifelong one. If the soul desires to maintain her purity of mind:

From the moment that the Crown of Thorns first settled My Head, I have never laid it down again. You must do the same: your one thought must be to love. And do you know when you do remove your crown of thorns? When you linger over some useless thought!

This struggle against useless thoughts is certainly among the most difficult, as Sister Consolata experienced throughout her whole life. But the battle has to be conducted with proper tactics, with calmness and gentleness, with great patience and even greater constancy, and without pretending that the purity of mind could ever achieve a perfection which is not of this life.

"You ask," writes Saint Francis de Sales, "how you might go about concentrating your spirit completely on God so that nothing could pull it back or detach it. I say that two things are necessary: to die and to be saved. For when there will be no more separation,[illegible]"

In fact it does not depend upon the soul whether she is more or less assailed by useless thoughts. So soul, no matter

how perfect [illegible] an pretend to be [illegible] free from the struggle she would be deluding herself [illegible] she believed [illegible] would ever [illegible] one to an end [illegible] suffices for the soul not to admit such useless thoughts voluntarily as Jesus explained to Sister Consolata.

You see Consolata thoughts which come to you without your desiring them do not make for unfaithfulness (October 9th, 1935)

This struggle even forms a part of the divine plan for the sanctification of the soul.

I leave you the struggle against useless thoughts for it is meritorious for you (October 13th, 1935)

The more insistent the battle the greater the merit for the soul.

Do you desire these useless thoughts? No. Then everything is to your merit. When one desires only to love then everything that resists that love becomes meritorious. Do you understand? (October 31st, 1935)

Not only is this meritorious for one's own soul, but it is also profitable for other souls.

I permit this assaulting battle of thoughts which oppresses you because it glorifies Me and gives Me souls. Offer Me these unidentified thoughts at every instant with this ejaculation: For You and for souls. I will transform these thoughts which come to you from morning to night and which hinder your love into graces and blessings for souls. (November 20th, 1935)

Souls are therefore Jesus's concern with the effort made by His poor creatures. The effort is necessary, however, for it is impossible [illegible] God with one's whole mind unless the mind is [illegible] free from other thoughts.

Together with purity of mind, Jesus demanded from Sister Consolata also virginal purity of speech, for without this the former would be almost impossible. Every useless word always causes a slight dissipation of the spirit, and this destroys intimacy with Jesus. All souls who have led an interior life have loved silence. So also Saint Therese, the little St. Teresa, of whom Father Pesenti writes: "She is determined never to transgress the law of silence. This silence which was and ever will be one of the foundations of the ascetical life is understood by Saint Therese of the Child Jesus as perfectly and totally as it would be by one who is living a religious order. As a result, she shows an astounding respect for religious silence, she dedicates to it a venerable cult." It may be asserted that all this applies only to cloistered souls. But even though the exigencies may vary for different souls, it is nevertheless true that Jesus has told all His followers: "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment."

It should not cause wonderment, therefore, that Jesus demanded from Sister Consolata not only all her thoughts but also all her words:

You must all your thoughts are Mine; give Me also all your words. I desire them all. I desire a continuous silence. I wish you to belong entirely to Me. Have no fear. I will take the responsibility for your thoughts and for your words as well; that is, I will do it that you will be able to keep these two promises. Are you content? [1] *Yes, Jesus, I must Me.* (March 19th, 1944)

The silence which Jesus demanded from her was made by the

[1] P. H. Pesenti, OP, *Una Rinascita Spirituale*, p. 179.
Matthew 12:36.

[2] Her interior was in the sense that she had made from a gift given by a formal promise.

silence but required by the rule also a determination not to speak unless she was spoken to except of course as might be required out of charity

I want you to think of Me alone and not to speak unless you are questioned When I will always give the answer and you must not be astonished at the replies which will be pronounced by you for it is I who will be giving them [illegible] 35

Thus and the following rules about silence are not intended for everyone who has been called to the New Sister Consolata and in particular are not those rules which refer to the time of recreation From Sister Consolata Jesus demanded such a rigour [illegible] not only from certain motives which we will explain immediately but also and because it was necessary for her to the utmost perfection of the virtues and purity of her love On the other hand it is also certain that without some [illegible] and constant effort at eliminating useless thoughts and [illegible] it is impossible to have true love for Jesus

Sister Consolata had to accustom herself to what was [illegible] required even when necessity or charity compelled her to speak

Keep silence always Be miserly even with necessary words instead give everyone a smile in exchange and always keep a smiling countenance August 2nd. 1933

Concerning silence during her various activities of the day Jesus suggested to her

When you are in doubt as to the hour of meditation or from always choose the one in which you will be more by your self where you will be better able to keep silence and you will be better able to love *That is My wish* August 22nd 1933

The Carmelites nuns have about a half hour of recreation each day Sister Consolata took a regular part in this community activity and the norm which Jesus gave her to follow was this

During recreation speak only when the conversation tends to become harmful and then change the subject.

Outside of such cases she was to keep to her resolution not to speak unless questioned, even during recreation time.

This applied not only to ordinary days but also to great solemnities when the Capuchin rule of silence was dispensed with.

On these days also, when your rule of silence is suspended, have a smile for everyone, but speak with no one unless you are spoken to, whereupon you will only reply. (Directories, 33)

She experienced this regret as a matter of fact, for on August 10th, 1896, she writes in her diary:

"Jesus makes certain demands, and once he has asked for something, he requires it always. For example, [illegible] silence on the days when the rule is suspended. I gave in during these last six days, the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and I might be poor soul, is all torn asunder. Our Lord has had compassion and has reminded me that sisters are always getting themselves ready, and that the novices are loving to hanging their clothes, brushing their habits and hair and washing their faces, in short, making themselves look proper once more, though she is convinced that it will be worn for a short while. So it is with me. In the morning I am determined to live the heroic life which Jesus desires, but then everything flies to pieces. I start in again with vigorous surrender, over and over again."

In the matter of charity, Thérèse Martin's vocation had to struggle against nature. She was of an extremely sensitive and frankness and was altogether incapable of [illegible] with others. She always gave expression to what her heart felt and that, among other things, caused her many a humiliation and penance, so much so that one day Jesus Himself had to give her encouragement by saying:

A soul who really belongs to Me and is possessed by Me becomes like a vase which steadfastly refuses to become fused with some contrary fluid such as vinegar or water. That is the explanation of your abhorrence of all that is not truth, purity, kindness, obedience and so forth. That is why, during a temptation, if the enemy does succeed in presenting with some unhallowed thought he is not able to remain within you and escapes at the first opportunity. And so, besides giving you an occasion to humiliate yourself as well, also here you to be more vigilant in the future. Such thoughts cannot remain in you, you see, for I wish to dwell in you all alone.

Purity of mind was therefore necessary in order to [illegible] and so forth. And purity of speech was necessary in order to avoid the above failings which do not cease to be such even though they be involuntary. Jesus confirmed this on September 14th, 1935:

Remain here in your own nothingness. Speak unless spoken to. In that way you will avoid all defect and unwanted acts, and you will be certain that when you do give a reply, your words will always be such as are desired and blessed in Me.

Jesus here points out that Sister Faustina should avoid not only defects but even imprudent acts. She had to exercise great care to keep the divine activities in her soul from being disturbed. Jesus was matter-of-fact in giving commands where [illegible] matters. The sentence [illegible] might be enough to betray her. Sister Faustina [illegible] this well, for she was [illegible] spiritual director.

You see, Father, it is more than necessary to be never to speak unless spoken to, even during recreation. For it would be dangerous to give expression to my thoughts and feelings in the [illegible] other small matters. I see the Hand of God. Jesus [illegible] the reason [illegible] and so during recreation period [illegible] a great attraction [illegible]

Purity of speech, there are the purity of thought was not acquired by Sister Consolata at a cheap price, or in the twinkling of an eye. It was rather a continuous struggle with herself and through life and required a strenuous effort. Let us quote from some of her writings.

"I desire, I desire, desire with all my strength not to permit one useless thought to enter and not to speak unless spoken to."

"Jesus did not deny His heavenly Father one single thought, one single word or action. We gave Him all, we must do the same and give Him truly everything, in every thought and a perpetual silence.

"The effort made by Jesus at Gethsemane made Him sweat blood. I will not let a useless thought enter at any cost, nor will I utter one sentence more than is strictly necessary.

"Things go better now during recreation hours, but my nature has not yet been completely deadened and sometimes I take a ready pleasure in talking. But now, rather than to keep from speaking unless spoken to, I must pay attention to replying only with what is really necessary. How true it is that we women love to talk!"

We found his pages and pages with similar confessions and resolutions. She was continually renewing her good will and never letting herself become disarmed by any difficulty or failure. When she was asked during her last illness to leave a particular nurse with her, he would continually, she replied:

"Observe the silence. For, in my own experience, I know that the greatest number of faults in a religious community come from not observing the prescribed silence.

Purity of mind and of speech is favored by and integrated into purity of heart. Besides imposing upon the religious soul an effective and affective detachment from the things of the outside world, it also requires a detachment from all that constitutes the little interior world of the convent, and above all an absolute ban on every unhealthy interest in the affairs of others. Given her temperament, this was the point over which Sister Consolata had to struggle the hardest. Her shortcomings with respect to purity of mind and speech nearly always resulted from her not having freed herself from other interests. She writes:

The principal obstacle to loving was my tongue, and during my novitiate it was the virtue of silence which I most strove after. But what a multiplicity of falls until I was able to observe it! Resolutions, struggles, and then, at the very moment when I was victorious, a sentence escaped me, and I was greatly perturbed.

One day, during a novena, Jesus said to me: *What is that keeps you from loving Me? Consolata, it is useless thoughts and being interested in others.* I promised not to interest myself in anyone. But after struggling for days, and after losing myself innumerable times, That does not interest me, that does not concern me, etc., at the next occasion that remark which I had so often choked down escaped me. One evening during meditation, Our Lord made me vividly understand the consequences of my defect, so that I wrote down these lines in the divine light I have come to understand that my tongue is bringing me to hell. Renewed resolutions, renewed falls. My weakness was extreme and formed my humiliation.

I experienced violent struggles at table. One sentence was explained to Mother Abbess, from these souls who kill themselves with extraordinary penances, I would require slavish obedience. But Jesus wished to combat such tendencies within

me and said to me one night while I was standing near the window of my cell: *Consolata, if while you are contemplating the sky, you let your eyes rest on the windows of the neighboring houses, you will find death. Similarly, if, instead of loving Me alone, you rest your eyes on the actions of others, you will find death.* That taught me a lesson."[1]

That taught her a lesson, but it did not free her from the struggle. That never happened. Jesus Himself had to intervene and admonish her more than once in this regard. Thus, during November, 1934:

Jesus to Me: What do your Sisters matter to you? You must think solely of following Me.

This is not saying that a Religious should not have the good of her Sisters at heart, but rather that she should never desire that good in opposition to the good of her own soul or to the designs of God which are not the same for all souls. She should not be too involved in matters which do not concern her. Here, for example, is how Jesus instructed Sister Consolata concerning extraordinary penances which He did not desire from her, but to which certain other Sisters had themselves drawn:

You see, Consolata, in heaven every choir of angels attends to the fulfillment of its own office without envying or desiring the office of another. Thus, in a community each one must attend to her own mission without envying or longing for something which pertains to another; and in your community, in fact, and everywhere, you must be my little Seraph, and therefore you must attend solely to loving without envying or desiring the mission of your other Sisters.[2]

On another occasion Jesus desired to put an end to a tendency in this direction by saying:

[1] See [illegible]

You must render obedience pay no attention to what your Sister gave Me. I send you that suffices (June 20, [illegible])

On the evening before she withdrew His sensible presence from her Jesus requested among other things also this:

Promise Me that you will not interest yourself in Sister X in her benefit or malevolently. No matter whether she observes the rule or not, whether she follows the community life or in complicity or have extraordinary paths with subterfuges, never mind. Promise Me that you will not speak or think of it, but as though she did not exist in the community. I do solely what I harm, or your tasks demand. (November [illegible], 1918)

One day when Sister Consolata was undecided as to whether to speak or keep silent about a certain Sister, Our Lady also gave her to understand:

"Do not trouble yourself about what is happening in other [illegible] do the same here, and consider yourself a pilgrim and a stranger with just one duty to [illegible]

[illegible] to break once and for all with that here [illegible] everything [illegible] the concerns of others. Sister Consolata answered that she has recourse to the same prayer, means she bound herself by a vow on May 20th, 1918.

During meditation the enemy attempted to distract my thoughts by making me concerned about the problems of others under the pretext of zeal. I found these concerns to be an obstacle on my path and had to free myself once and for all. Now I expected me to bind myself by a new vow to be renewed at every temptation, and that this would be prone to be [illegible]. I knew that it was a spiritual duty, but I would approve such a vow, and so I promised: "I will not concern myself with anything which occurs in the community, nor with anyone."

This vow proved extremely helpful, but the struggle against outside interests continued with more or less vehemence

into the end of her life and required from her a continuous and heroic effort of the will.

We must also keep in mind that this triple power of mind of speech and of heart must not be an end in itself but a means for advancing in the perfection of love. Jesus declared this expressly on June 17th, 1934.

Forget everything and everybody and think only of loving Me more. Concentrate your every thought, every heartbeat, every sentence upon this one thing: love! Also on August 18th, [illegible]

Do not think of anything, anything, anything else but to love Me and to suffer with all possible love. That is sufficient.

For of what use would it be to deny oneself speech and outside interests if Jesus were not in the heart? It is not a question, therefore, of silence for the sake of silence, but of silence for the sake of love, and of love for the sake of a life of union with Jesus.

Consecrate your entire experience, your most intimate, hidden, subtle, eliminate every other thought, your representations, your words. (November 6th, 1934)

What does it mean to experience Jesus in this way? It means to live so close united to Him, that one's self ceases to exist and becomes transformed into Him, becomes as it were identified with Him and as it dwelled in Him. And this is precisely what Saint Paul said of himself: "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me." And Jesus told Sister Consolata on November 6th, 1934:

If you will obliterate yourself and will not permit any outside thoughts to enter, then I will be thinking within you; you will not speak, then I will speak within you; if you will stop listening your own will, then I will act within you. It will no more be you who lives, but I in you.

[19] Galatians 2:20

In this way the soul, and all her strength and activity remains as it were dormant, and who can tell what marvelous strides she will then make day by day toward her own sanctification. That is why Jesus said to Sister Consolata on June 23rd, 1935:

Bid farewell for good to every thought, every word, let others do what they will, you must remain in Me. You will gather much fruit for I will be the one who acts.

Sister Consolata's every effort was aimed at eliminating thoughts, words, and outside interests in order to achieve a letting-go of Jesus. He desired nothing else from her, for in that was true and complete holiness.

Remember and keep it well fixed in your mind, you who long so much to gather abundant fruit, in the Gospels I did not declare that you would bring forth much fruit if you undertook extraordinary mortifications, but that you would do so if you remained in Me. Therefore, do not depart from the straight road, but devote your every effort to remaining well united with the Vine. Do not separate yourself from the thought of Jesus only, not even by a single thought or an unrelated fear, saying: 'I will think of everything'. (September 26th, 1935)

A soul who wishes to make progress in the life of love must keep ever before herself these lessons which Jesus taught to Sister Consolata concerning the purity of spirit. Although it is true that extraordinary means are not for all souls, it is nevertheless true that the perfection of charity in its ordinary way is intended for all souls, even in its complete flowering. That is commanded by the first and great commandment of the law. Those who affirm that the life of love is reserved for only a few souls are stating something that is contrary to both the letter and the spirit of the Gospels.

THE LOVING SOUL GIVES ALL TO JESUS

God has insisted many times that the soul must concentrate her efforts on the one duty of love. This points clearly to the fact that love is everything and that, therefore, by means of love the soul really gives everything to Jesus. Was not this the great discovery which gave wings to the Little Flower and enabled her to achieve her own sanctification and to carry out her magnanimous desire for an apostolate? "It was charity," she writes, "which gave me the key to my vocation. I came to understand that if the Church had a body made up of various members, she surely would not be lacking the most necessary and most noble of all organs, the Church must also have a heart, and that inflamed with love. I came to understand that it was love alone which made her members act. If love had ever become extinguished, the apostles would not have proclaimed the Gospel, and the martyrs would have refused to shed their blood. I have understood that love embraces all vocations, that love is everything."[illegible]

As far as the Little Flower's soul was concerned, this was for her a discovery. But this could not be said regarding the Catholic Church's doctrine. When we considered the above words of the saint are really only an echo of the teaching of the great Apostle. He reminds us first of the sublime truth of our incorporation in Christ: "You are the body of Christ and each of you is a member." Therefore, every member has his own proper gift and must not envy the gifts of the others but rather aspire to the highest gifts. He adds: "I show unto you a yet more excellent way." That is, one that is better than all the charismatic gifts, better than any of the offices which can be held in

[illegible]

[illegible] 1 Corinthians 12:27

[illegible] 1 Corinthians 12:31

the church and better than any of the works which are at present in the church. What is this way? In reply the Apostle delivers that marvelous hymn of love which can justly be called the dogmatic and moral synthesis of the Gospel message. It forms the entire 13th chapter of his First Epistle to the Corinthians, and we print here its first part, for we will have occasion to refer to it again:

"If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge, and if I should have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profits me nothing."

"Every good work therefore — learning, faith, alms, sacrifice, and even martyrdom — both individually and as a whole, is as nothing and has no value without love, it follows that our love counts only love is enough everything. And so even a soul who has not been called to such works, or for whom it is impossible to carry them out, is really giving everything to God when she loves Him with all her heart, with all her mind, with all her strength."

This, we repeat, was the point of departure for Saint Therese when she embraced the path of love, and it was the same with Sister Josefa, to whom Jesus said:

Love Me, I manifest love Me, and Love is everything, and we are only giving Me everything. (August [illegible])

When you love Me, you give Jesus everything He derives from His creature love. (September 26th, 1935)

Our Lord did not wish her to dissipate her spiritual energies in a multitude of often inconclusive resolutions, when one single resolve to love would comprise all others.

Love is everything. If you will now concentrate upon this one resolution, you will be giving everything to Jesus. (December 1st, 1935)

There is no doubt about one's having to obey the Law and who does? The one who loves. "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word." — Jesus told Sister Consolata on November 15th, 1935.

You see, Consolata, My creatures make Me out as one who is fear-inspiring rather than kind; and I, on the other hand, delight in being gracious and totally kind. What is it that I require? Love, and love only, for he who loves Me serves Me.

Conversely, he who does not love is already outside the Law. "He who does not keep not My words."[1] And he who observes the Law only out of fear would not be performing a perfect work, as Jesus explained to Sister Consolata on November 16th, 1935.

I do see I long to have My creatures serve Me out of love. Therefore, if a soul intends some form for fear of My chastisements, that is not what I am longing for from My creatures. I desire to be loved. I want the love of My creatures. When they will come to love Me, they will no longer offend Me. It is how two people truly love each other: they never offend each other. That is precisely the way it ought to be between the Creator and His creatures.

One day Sister Consolata was deeply impressed by a sentence she had heard during meditation and asked Jesus about it. Jesus assured her that it was a heavenly thought, perhaps coming from worldly people. Then she was blessed with the sentence: "Gently," Jesus replied.

Rather than with diligence, you should strive to do everything with much love. Whether you are working, eating, drinking, or

[1] John 14:23

[2] John 14:24

keeping do everything with a great deal of love. for I thirst for love. Love is what I look for in every work. (November 29th, 1935)[*]

At other times also Jesus insisted on this point of giving value to every action through love.

For all your attention upon your task of the moment so as to accomplish it with all possible love. (October [illegible]th, 1935)

Your actions will have more value in proportion as you increase in love. (November 16th, 1935)

The same thing may be said of every difficulty which the soul encounters. How great must have been the value of the roses of Saint Therese in the eyes of God because of the fervor with which they were gathered and offered! We find the same language and almost the identical expressions used by Jesus in His instructions to Sister Consolata.

Transform everything disagreeable that you meet with into little roses; gather them with love and offer them to Me with love. (November 14th, 1935)

[illegible] gifts which are offered with all possible love. Then even your trifles become precious to Me. (December 3rd, 1935)

It is not, therefore, the other aspect which Jesus considers or is kind for what can we give Him that is not already His? "If I should be hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof."[*] But our love, yes, that is our own, and that is what Jesus looks for. He told Sister Consolata on November 24th, 1935:

Your consolation is in Jesus does not demand heroic acts from you, but merely trifles; only they must be offered with all your heart.

And this must be a comfort to those souls — and they form the great majority — who are not called to perform great works but pass their lives in performing their humble daily duties.

See I Corinthians 10:3.

[*] Psalm 49:12.

unseen and unappreciated by the world. Sister Consolata was arranging a bunch of flowers for Our Lady one morning, but they were already fairly wilted, and she was regretting this. Then the voice of grace gave her to understand:

It is not always possible to offer God beautiful flowers of virtues, but they can always be accompanied by love. Jesus does not look at the flower but at the love with which it is offered.

The soul is wise, therefore, in acting directly at love with a determined effort while practicing a virtue, rather than striving for actual virtue, for it is love which gives life to the virtues and perfects them. "If mutual brotherly love covers a multitude of sins," how can one doubt but that love repairs before God the defects to which a soul is subject. True, there is either a case of simple physical failings, and these do not count, or of venial ethical shortcomings, and these, as we shall soon see, are first made good by love and then gradually eliminated. A purely formal perfection is thus opposed to that essential perfection which is in the heart. In fact, any virtue which is not related to the ultimate and perfect Good, though it is a virtue, is an imperfect one. One can understand, therefore, how Jesus could say to Sister Consolata:

When the heart is very sick, it makes even a robust person inactive. Thus, if the heart does not belong to Me, I do not know what to make of the soul, no matter how much she is adorned with virtues.

To sum up: that soul is more perfect which comes closer to God. And as God is Love, that soul comes nearer to Him and is the more perfect which loves Him the more. Jesus confirmed this to Sister Consolata when He said:

That soul is dearest to Me who loves Me the most.

LOVE RICHNESS ALL FROM JESUS

The soul who loves Jesus with all her heart and all her strength—spirit not only gives all to Jesus, but also receives all from Him, both for her own sanctification and for the salvation of souls. We will limit ourselves here to a consideration of what concerns the sanctification of the soul.

It is the loving soul above all others who meets the needs of not acting with ephemeral wishing and empty protestations of love but of furnishing a proof of her love by giving herself completely. That soul has understood the truth just stated that in order to be meritorious and fruitful of good for oneself and others, good works must proceed from love and that it is love itself that suggests them, sustains them, vivifies them, and makes them perfect.

In other words, it is not wrong to do good works in order to arrive at love, but it is more logical and we might say more theological to strive to love in order to arrive at good works. Saint Francis de Sales gave this reply to one who told him he desired to be very humble so as to be able to love the Lord deeply. "I, however, wish to love the Lord a great deal in order to be very humble." Which of these paths is the right one? We stand with Saint Francis de Sales who in turn agrees with Saint Paul when he wrote: "Charity is patient, is kind; charity envies not, deals not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeks not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinks no evil, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."[1]

Saint Francis de Sales writes further: "Saint Paul does not directly say that charity produces patience, meekness and the

[1] 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

like, but he states that charity "is not patient, meek, etc." It is in fact a characteristic of the higher virtues, that they can not merely cause the lesser virtues to become operative, but that they themselves can also fulfill what they demand of the others. Hence Saint Thomas writes concerning this assertion of Saint Paul: "Charity brings all works of virtue to perfection."[illegible] And Saint Ambrose, writing to Demetrius, "is patience and these other virtues, members of charity." Saint Augustine says that "charity [illegible] and improves all virtues and perfects and vivifies operations with its light."[illegible] Therefore, he who possesses charity is "clothed in a nuptial garment, adorned with every kind of virtue, like Joseph's coat of many colors." Or rather, his perfection is the epitome of all perfections, the perfection of all virtues, and without it, a would not only be unpleasant to possess virtues in their entirety, but one would not even be able to achieve perfection in any one virtue.

[illegible] shows the avoidance of virtues practiced exclusively [illegible] and through [illegible]. We stand [illegible] with Saint Paul, but above all with the Gospel: "Without Me you can do nothing." That also is real. And it seems to us that a person acts with greater security if he aims directly at union with Jesus in order to arrive at good works, rather than the opposite: for he can accomplish nothing without Jesus.

[illegible] what Jesus in the Gospel adds: "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you the branches. He that abides in Me and I in him, he same bears

[illegible] Summa Theologiae II, II, 23, 4 ad 2.

[illegible] De Moribus Eccl. cb. 15

[illegible]

[illegible] Book [illegible] Chapter II

[illegible] John 15:5

much fruit.[7] And how should we dwell in Jesus so that He can dwell in us? God is love, and he that abides in love abides in God, and God in him.[8] How clear and straightforward everything is in the Gospel! Through love we achieve union with Jesus and through union with Jesus we obtain every fruit of sanctification in abundance, for the virtues flow into the soul just as the sap flows from the vine into the branches.

This truth had its solemn confirmation in the teaching, and even more so in the life, of Saint Therese who, through love, attained every virtue to an heroic degree as the Church has proclaimed. And now it would appear that God desires to confirm that truth anew through the teaching and example of Sister [illegible]. For that reason we will append here a few of the instructions which Jesus gave to the humble Capuchin nun in confirmation of this.

Above all, love is the first and most perfect preparation for our sins. Repentance which excludes the love of God, teaches Saint Francis de Sales, is imperfect. Repentance which does not exist in love but is without it is imperfect and cannot procure salvation by itself until it has attained to love and has become united with it.[9] After all, we have only to open the Gospel. Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much.[10] And to remove all doubt in this respect: "To whom less is forgiven, he loves less." The Gospels are intended for all time and for all souls, just as this teaching of Jesus to Sister Consolata is meant for all souls. *Do you wish to make penance for your sins? Then give Me Love shall be your penance.* (November 2, 2nd 1935)

[7] [illegible] 4

[8] I John 14:16

[9] [illegible] Book [illegible] Chapter [illegible]

[10] Luke 7:47

The same may be said for those who wish to make reparation for the sins of others. On Palm Sunday, 1936, while Sister Consolata was reading the Passion of Our Lord, she paused over the betrayal of Judas.

"Oh, if only I could make reparation for all sacrileges!" At that she heard: *Yes, with love you can make reparation for the horrible sacrileges; with love you can suffer, you can immolate yourself and can consummate the sacrifice. Everything through love and only through love!*

Love is not only reparation, but also purification. In fact it is a light which reveals to the soul the slightest defects which lessen its beauty; it is a force which gives the soul the necessary energy to eradicate her defects to the very roots; it is a fire which burns and consumes the noxious weeds which spring up within us. "I know," said Saint Therese, "that the fire of love is more sanctifying than that of purgatory."

On the evening of November 11th, 1935, Jesus said to Sister Consolata, as she was praying before the tabernacle:

Consolata, offer Me your shortcomings of today.

"O Jesus, I cannot recall them."

I too have forgotten them.

"And so?"

Tell Me that you love Me, and go in peace, for they do not exist any more.

On another day when she humbly confessed herself to be full of deficiencies, Jesus made her understand: *Love Me. Love will make all your deficiencies vanish.* (August 7th, 1935.)

As has already been said, Jesus did not wish her to dwell again on her own infidelities, and so He told her on July 9th, 1934:

Do not always keep looking back at yourself, and on what you have done, but look beyond all those defects, and love always.

After renewing the soul by reparation and purification,

love makes her achieve all virtues and become perfect in them. Great was certainly the particular vocation of Sister Consolata. Great were God's designs in her regard. But it was also necessary that she should respond to them. Note how Jesus reassured her on August 30th, 1935:

Do you want to live up to your vocation? Then love Me alone. Love Me always. Then you will be conforming yourself completely to My plans for you.

This natural virtue excites the exercise of virtue, but it proceeds by means of love, that the soul is certain to practice it. Thus Jesus promised her concerning the love of neighbor which was so dear to her:

You must think only about loving Me, and I will see to it that you become charitable. July 2nd, 1935.

A similar promise concerned humility, that fundamental virtue, the foundation of all perfection:

The more you are dwell in Me, the more will I let My humility work through you. (August 22nd, 1935.)

Love Me alone. I will attend to maintaining you in humility. If you will but dwell in Me, that which is in the vine will also be in the branches. July 4th, 1935.

It is not therefore as though a soul did not appreciate the value and feel the need of the other virtues when she follows the path of love; she is deeply convinced that the surest means for attaining these virtues is to be closely united to Jesus, like the branch to the vine. Hence Jesus warning to Sister Consolata lest she stray from the right way:

Love is sanctity. The more you love Me, the more you will become holy. (August 29th, 1935.)

Remember that love, and only love, will bring you to the highest degree of sanctity. November 8th, 1935.

At the same time God the Father assured her concerning

the summit of sanctity. *Remember, Consolata, that love and only love will bring you victorious to every summit.* [September 29th, 1935]

FRUITS OF THE LIFE OF LOVE

We will see later how the soul can put the life of love into actual practice. Here let us briefly mention a few particular fruits which we derive from it besides those already touched upon.

The first is the intimate and profound joy of the soul who knows and feels that she possesses God and is possessed by Him. She knows and feels how she can best utilize the short days of this life for the glory of God, for herself and for the salvation of souls; she knows and feels that nothing and no one can tear this immense treasure from her, if only she will faithfully persevere on the road she has taken, and so she can make her own the words of the Apostle: "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?"[9]

One of the earliest lessons which Jesus taught to Sister Consolata was this:

Love Me, and you will be happy; and the more you love Me, the happier you will be! Even when you find yourself in utter darkness, love will produce light; love will produce strength; and love will produce joy. [March 15th, 1934]

This is true of all souls, but in particular of Religious: the souls chosen and beloved by Christ.

If an Ms betrothed would love Me, I would pour heaven into

[9] Romans 8:35

their hearts even while they still dwell upon earth, for heaven is entered by loving Me. (August 20th, 1935)

Oh, that every soul might understand this truth. That this poor world might understand it, which has lost the way to its true and only happiness because it has turned away from Jesus! On October 13th, 1935, Our Lord exclaimed to Sister Consolata:

Oh, if people would only love Me, what felicity would reign in this unhappy world!

And what shall we say about suffering, that heritage of every human creature which is such a mighty means to sanctification? Will the soul who lives for love be spared suffering? On the contrary, love is nourished precisely by sacrifice. Calvary is the very height of sacrifice because it is the ultimate in love. Jesus promised Sister Consolata on May 2[illegible]th, 1936:

Love will carry you to the height of suffering.

But it is actually not enough to merely suffer; one must suffer well, and this difficult science is learned only in the school of love:

In order to suffer well, you need to love; such love, always love, and to love intensely. (November 1[illegible]th, 1935)

Suffering has a supernatural value in proportion to the purity and the depth of the love which gives it life. Hence Jesus told Sister Consolata on December 1st, 1935:

Love is greater than suffering, and suffering will be the more perfect, the more powerful the love which is in you.

[illegible] love, and only love, that can change suffering into joy. [illegible] exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation.[illegible] This Jesus confirmed to Sister Consolata on December 1st, 1935:

When suffering is accepted with love, it is no longer suffering, but is changed into joy.

■ 2 Corinthians 7:4

On October 18th, 1935, God the Father also promised this in exchange for love:

Consolata, I give you the joy of sorrow, and joy in suffering.

This naturally does not prevent the soul from "feeling" the suffering, nor does it dispense her from making an effort to suffer with perfection. Nevertheless, it is always true that love gives the soul the necessary strength. "Put me as a seal upon your heart, as a seal upon your arm; for love is strong as death."[8] And it is even stronger than death, for the soul who loves is invested with divine strength. Sister Consolata was one day bewailing her own infidelity:

"O Jesus, I am so worthless!"

Then unite yourself to strength!

"How can I do that?"

By remaining in love. United to strength, you will be stronger than the strong. (February 26th, 1936)

And then it is which is equally inseparable from the life of love, a profound and stable peace of soul. Having abandoned herself with complete trust to Love, the soul has by that very fact eliminated the cause of so much unrest which comes from a multitude of unsatisfied and unattainable desires and from ever searching out new paths, new means, new practices. The soul has simplified her spiritual life to the greatest possible extent. There is now but one desire: to love; but one occupation: to love; she is preoccupied with only one thing: to love. Everything else will come to her through love.

It is not, therefore, a case of ecstasies or anything of the sort, but the exact opposite: for to live a life of love means to live the supernatural life as intensely as possible and to concentrate upon one point only: love. One of the teachings most often repeated by Jesus to Sister Consolata was this:

[8] Canticle of Canticles 8:6

You must think only of loving Me! I will think of everything else, even to the smallest details!

In this manner, all thoughts, useless outside interests, oppressing preoccupations, all are eliminated for the soul who lives in love.

Consolata, you know that I am thinking of everything, that I am providing for everything down to the smallest details. Therefore do not let one thought enter your mind, not one outside interest. Have no fear, I am taking care of you! Have faith in Me.

[illegible] did she experience this throughout her whole life. When she had been deprived of Our Lord's sensible presence she wrote:

"From the day on which Jesus told me: *I will think of everything, even the smallest details, but you must think only of loving Me*, from that day on He took upon Himself the responsibility for all my duties, my promises, my desires, in short, everything. And even today, when He is silent, He continues to think of everything, even the smallest details, concerning me, and Consolata has only to think of loving Him. Yes, the daily events are matters which most no interest me any more. I must dispose myself to let no [illegible] things of heaven enter. Heaven consists of loving, and so I must not permit anything but love to enter."

If heaven consists in loving, then the desires of heaven, as we have already pointed out, is an act of the soul which is living on earth. But love on this planet is [illegible] tant, whereas in heaven it will be [illegible] ant and adoring. Sister Consolata desired herself one day to be unworthy of eternal happiness because it seemed to her that she was doing nothing, but Jesus told her:

You think you do not deserve these joys in eternity because you are doing nothing? Tell Me, what does the catechism say? That you have been created to love Me, to serve Me, and to be happy

with Me in an eternity. And you—do you not love Me? Do you not serve Me? Well, then you are entitled to the glory and joy of heaven. I give you heaven not only out of love, but out of justice. (November 15th, 1935)

And what heaven? For an answer we cite another quotation from Sister Consolata's diary, May, 1935:

This evening I remained for a few minutes in the sanctuary to do an act of charity. While I was at work grace was poured into my heart and filled with kindly thoughts. You will reward me with love, what I will be able to do with my minutes. You love Me, and I will give you all the glory. Jesus, you will also give me all the suffering, will you not? Yes, all the suffering, all the love, and all the glory, because you love Me.

If we understand the doctrine of grace which Jesus here showed to Sister Consolata, then love does not take our faculties and operations and apply to them an external aid, but love is the existing form within by giving a new form of life and a new perfection. This has its roots in grace which is the seed of glory. When we conclude therefore that this gift in exists the totality of the present and the future, the suffering, love, glory, we are merely translating this perfect work of charity into the subject which we love.

How can one still doubt that love is everything, that it gives all to Jesus and receives all from Him? In concluding therefore this chapter on the life of love, we will have his human creature who believed in Love, who hoped and rejoiced in Love, who loved, we give expression to the song of her heart.

Jesus, I love you, song always sung in the hour of battle as well as in the hour of love, in the hour of joy as in the hour of sorrow. This morning, this be my life consumed in loving You and in sacrificing myself. And my artistic power, my weak

souls will acquire infinite merit through Your Heart. Oh yes, I feel that Consolata will be an apostle of Your Heart, of Your mercy, always, even to the end of time! You have told me so Yourself, O Jesus! Jesus, I do believe, I believe, and I confide in You. Jesus, I love You."

4

LIVING AN ACT OF PERFECT LOVE

To live a life of love means to see to it that love truly becomes the very life of the soul, that the heart, the mind, one's strength, everything, is always employed in loving the good God. "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul, and with your whole mind, and with your whole strength." In other words, it means arriving at perfect execution of this other precept of the divine Master: "As the Father has loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love."[1] To *abide* signifies a continuous action, in *love*, not in the simple state of grace, but in affective and effective love, in *My love*, in the love of Jesus as an expression also of our love for His and our Father.

In practice, in the divine instructions given to Sister Consolata, this amounts to an effort of the soul to transform her own life into an act of perfect love, not only to perform all actions with love, not only to gather and offer up with love the flowers of small sacrifices and small acts of virtue, but to make an effort to enliven every instant of this short earthly journey with love.

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[1] Matt. 22:37.
[2] John 15:9.

What is perfect love? It is above all a pure love with which one loves God for His own sake. It is also actual love which is undoubtedly more perfect than habitual love. It is a love therefore which embraces God and souls in the same heartbeat, for it is impossible to love God without loving one's neighbor. We should also add that our love for Jesus cannot and must not ever be separated from our love for the Blessed Virgin, for we cannot please Jesus if we do not also love Her and our Mother. Nor will our love reach God in true perfection unless it is made to pass through the love of Mary, the one and only creature who has ever loved Jesus here below in the way He wishes to be loved and ought to be loved.

If a formula for perfect love is desired, it must therefore comprise, together with the love of Jesus, also the love of our Mary and of souls. Such is precisely the formula for the act of love which Jesus communicated to Sister Consolata, for transmittal to all souls.

THE CONVENIENCE OF A FORMULA

It is understandable that the majority of souls will require the aid of some practical, short, and easy formula to serve as an expression of their own love and so facilitate an intimacy of love with Jesus.

Just as a mother would lend her little child an aid of love and teach him, over and over again, that prayer which he should repeat in returning her affection, so do Jesus deign to bend down over every new soul. Sister Consolata, in order to dictate to her, or, when required, to impart to her that unceasing act of love which from then on was to constitute the very essence of her spiritual life and the principal means for realizing her vocation to live her very life of love.

THE FORMULA FOR THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE

The act of love which Jesus dictated to Sister Consolata is worded as follows:

Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls!

It will be of benefit to souls to examine the theological value of this act of love, at least briefly.

1. It would be impossible to formulate a more *perfect* act of love in fewer words, for it contains everything: love of Jesus, love of Mary, and love of souls.

2. This is an act of *pure* love, for by it one gives to God the most excellent gift of all: love and souls.

3. At the same time, it is an act of *perfect charity*, for in it the love of one's neighbor finds its highest expression in an unceasing prayer for the benefit of souls, and it comprises all souls, including those in purgatory, and all their needs, as explained by Jesus Himself.

4. This act of love is therefore a synthesis of the two great commandments which are said to be the very essence of the Law.

5. Because this act is unceasing, in the sense we have now explained, it brings the soul to a stable and perfect fulfillment of the first commandment, which is to love God with all one's heart. The act of love must spring from the heart, for it is the heart that loves with the greatest possible intensity and intensity with the whole mind. The continuity of the act of love presupposes a lively, ever-renewed voluntary thought with the whole soul, as Saint Thomas explains. When the unceasing act of love is sustained by the force of the will, not by sentiment, with one's *whole strength*, in order to attain the greatest possible continuity and intensity of love, it is necessary to concentrate all the soul's energies upon it.

Saint Francis de Sales writes: "Man is the perfection of the universe, the soul is the perfection of man, and love is the per-

fectionate of the world. Hence the love of God is the end, the perfection, and the ultimate beauty of the universe. This is what gives greatness and supremacy to the divine commandment which the Savior calls the first and great commandment. That commandment is like a sun which illumines and gives dignity to all the holy laws, the divine precepts, and all the Sacred Scriptures. Everything was created for that heavenly love, and everything is related to it. From the sacred trunk of this commandment have sprung all the counsels, the exhortations, the inspirations, and the other commandments, like blossoms from the same tree, and its fruit is life eternal. It is a great commandment, and its perfect execution carries over into life eternal, in fact it is life eternal itself.[1]

6. The act of love is in itself and in the above formula also a prayer. In fact, it is the most perfect of prayers, for it brings the soul to a literal and perfect execution of that other evangelical precept: "We ought always to pray, and not to lose heart."[2]

7. Through this act of love the soul lives a *supernatural life* as intense as possible for the glory of God, for her own sanctification, and for the salvation of souls.

8. Through it the soul lives an *essentially mortified life* by excluding everything else in silent self dedication. Thus she carries through the ranks of the *little victims of love*.

9. In the following we will see in what the divine favors and promises consist which accompany the unceasing act of love.

1. *Of the Love of God*, Book 10, chapter 1.
2. Luke 18:1.

HOW THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE IS TO BE UNDERSTOOD

The instructions which Jesus gave to Sister Consolata concerning the unceasing act of love establish its far-reaching importance and prevent one from falling into simple errors.

It would be wrong, for instance, to mistake the act of love for a mere exclamation, to be uttered more or less frequently in preference to others. That would not be a bad thing, and for the multitude of souls it may even be sufficient, but this would not correspond to the Divine intention. Our Lord has not in mind to suggest a new exclamation, but to point out to souls a spiritual way which would make the act of love easy for them. When the act of love is to be a way of life for the soul, then it follows that the act ought to be unceasing, at least by an effort of the will, in order to become like the breathing of the soul.

Another point which needs to be made clear is how the continuity of the act of love is to be understood as regards one's daily occupations and diverse duties. Jesus [illegible] explained this to Sister Consolata. He promised her [illegible] divine assistance and encouraged her to be faithful to the act of love, and then He suggested to her the following practical form which is applicable to all souls:

Consolata, just as I have taken on the responsibility for your thoughts and words, so also for your continuous act of love. But you must remember once and for all that when you are occupying with Me or when you are writing or meditating, the act of love is known to Me with me, and the same even though the heart is obliged to keep silent at these times.

It is clear, therefore, that the unceasing act of love does not interfere with the multiplicity of duties and the regular duties of the one who practices it. It is not detrimental to other acts of piety, whether of obligation or free will. It does not hinder one's daily occupations, nor can it in turn be hindered by them. It is

the soul must be intent upon continuing her song of love in the measure allowed by the nature of her occupation.

A third observation is equally important: the unceasing act of love must not be a superficial thing, a mechanical repetition of a formula, but rather a true cantiche of love, in fact, and this must be stressed — it is not even necessary that the act be pronounced with the lips. An act of love is not a simple spasm phrase but an intelligent act of the mind which thinks of loving, and of the will which desires to love, and so loves. Thus the unceasing act of love is a continuous silent effusion of love. The formula, one must remember, is no more than an aid which enables the soul to concentrate more easily upon love, upon perfect love.

In the diary of the servant of God, Father Adolph Petit, S.J., we read: "When someone inquired of him about some means for nourishing this love, he would reply: 'I know of but one: to love.' Just as one learns to read by reading and to write by writing, so does one learn to love ever more by multiplying one's acts of love for Him. Each one of these acts is as if were an armful of kindling to be thrown on the fire: it renders the flame of love more ardent."

This is also what Jesus told Sister Consolata on November 26th, 1935, and His words may well serve as an introduction to the doctrine of the unceasing act of love:

If a creature of good will desires to love Me and to make of her life one single act of love from the moment of her rising until the last sleep at night — from the hour he is well understood then — and perform innumerable things for that soul. Write that down.

It is with the heart, therefore, that one must be unceasingly loving. And that, we repeat, does not mean that the soul must feel delight or sweetness in doing so, nor must she feel herself to be loving. It suffices to desire to love. Saint Francis de Sales writes that the desire to love is love, both being de

pendent on the saints [illegible] Not only that, but one always loses perfection when one eliminates whatever might be a hindrance to giving oneself entirely to God.[illegible]

THE DIVINE REQUESTS FOR THE INCREASING ACT OF LOVE

From the time of my very first spiritual exercises among the Apostolines [illegible] Sister [illegible] at [illegible] Jesus asked from my soul that which I [illegible] later continuous to [illegible] the increasing act of love. He fixed the goal [illegible] was to attain and He assured me that in the light of that love all obstacles, even passion and [illegible] would be eradicated. Nothing must detach you from the continuous act of love. He told me during meditation on the day of my [illegible]. And later during [illegible] I ask only this of you: a continuous act of love.

At the beginning it was: Jesus, I love You. I am [illegible] used [illegible] and: Jesus, Mary, I love You. And [illegible] I computed this: Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save [illegible].

From that [illegible] there were [illegible] divine requests for the act of love. We hope we will be pardoned for giving numerous quotations even at the risk of repetition. It is a matter of the greatest importance and constitutes as it were the very justification for this new divine message. Everything we have said so far about the life of love, though most useful and in a certain measure necessary, would now have a relative value because already [illegible] of the [illegible] and writings of other privileged souls, were it not integrated with the new and [illegible] doctrine of the act of love. For the sake of [illegible] we

[illegible] Book [illegible] chapter [illegible] Book [illegible] chapter [illegible]

[illegible] *Summa Theologiae* II, II, 184, 2

will grant here the various divine requests, or at least those which we have at hand, for Sister Consolata's diary is not yet available in its entirety.

The first request is of March 25th, 1934.

Love Me, Consolata, your act of love delights Me!

Jesus did not only recommend it. He requested it. (October 15th, 1934)

Consolata, I have certain rights over you, therefore I desire from you an unceasing Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls, from the time you awaken in the morning to when you go to sleep in the evening! I require it!

And, as though in answer to a spontaneous difficulty of the poor creature, He added:

If you believe Me to be omnipotent, then you must also believe Me to be capable of granting you this continual act of love. I will it.

The act of love was therefore to become the vital nourishment for the soul.

As a little fish will die outside of water, so also will your soul die the act of love. (June 23rd, 1935)

On the other hand, just as the fish keeps alive in water and develops, so also was the life of grace to develop and become perfect through the unceasing act of love and the perfecting of charity in her, until it achieved that complete divesting and annihilating of herself, which is a mystical death.

You must live in self effacement and enveloped in one single and continual Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. Nothing else! No, me and nothing else must exist for you, only the act of love. (October 25th, 1935)

This mystical death is not quietism, but a transition to the heroic life, for now He no longer finds any obstacles to His divine workings and so can act in the soul as her uncontested sovereign.

I pour your self-denial I will build up My marvelous work. And do you know what can procure your self-abandonment? The unceasing act of love. Nothing remains of yourself or for yourself but through the unceasing act of love offered for Me. (September 7th, 1935)

Jesus desired her soul to become so absorbed in this continual act of love as to become identified with and transformed into it.

Saint John the Baptist called himself a voice crying in the wilderness. You are to be an unceasing act of love. (April 4th, 1936)

No creature was to distract her; therefore, Jesus her one duty:

Dive in silence, launch out into the deep.[4] But withdraw yourself for ever from all that is earth and creature, and head for the open sea with the unceasing act of love. Forward! Forward! Beyond the eternal shores! (June 28th, 1936)

She was to devote all her spiritual energies to this single purpose:

Consecrate in order not to lose time, you should renew all your promises every time you pronounce them, but if you do it you have hardly raised yourself up again, as you have forgotten them, but once an act of love, which is everything, at any time and under every condition. (October 4th, 1935)

And because Sister Consolata was to assist Jesus in her particular work daily during this consummation, Jesus suggested to her, on May 30th, 1936:

Be extremely vigilant, not to permit one thought to enter, not to utter a single sentence except in reply. Just do not lose yourself in this effort. No! Lose yourself rather in the unceasing act of love.

[4] In the Holy Scriptures will be expounded, either in

[4] Luke 5:4

[illegible] requirement of observing a rigid [illegible] in order to persevere in maintaining Sister Consolata in this [illegible]

nuity of love

[illegible] not suffice for you to do your talking during recreation. *What I desire is the continual act of love. That alone require* [illegible] *from you.* September 8th, [illegible]

[illegible] raged against that unceasing act of [illegible] Sister [illegible] path she was leaving behind [illegible] with these words:

Whatever distracts you in your act of love does not come from Me! (April 5th, 1936)

In short, Jesus desired her to be heroic in the continuity [illegible] as to attain to the greatest possible perfection:

[illegible] be sure that throughout your day you should not desire Me the right act of love, not even the [illegible] understand. [illegible] 31st, 1936

[illegible] of an unceasing act of love, Sister Consolata [illegible] her response in [illegible] sanctification [illegible] February 2, 1935, Jesus told her:

Forget everything else. Love Me continuously, even though your heart be of ice or stone. That does not matter. But everything depend upon unceasing act of love, and upon nothing else.

[illegible]

You must give to Jesus the little thing she asks of you. It is not your mission, and that the principal act of love, no matter in what [illegible] you may happen to be.

Jesus was eager and insistent to keep Sister Consolata steadfast in her contents to [illegible] under all conditions [illegible] and [illegible] abstains from making acts of love when in that [illegible] that they [illegible] hearts.

the enemy's craftiest trick to hinder the soul from loving. Saint Francis de Sales writes: "To say to God, I love You, is something we ought never to leave undone, even though we may have no relish for saying it at all, for we do have the will and the great desire to love Him."[1] Naturally, in that case the continuity of love means an effort against nature, and so it was also in the case of Sister Consolata against whom the enemy unleashed all manner of attacks. This put her on her guard. Jesus told her on October 10th, 1935:

Consolata: it matters little that the devil and your passions unleash on your soul every possible attack; do not mind thunder storm and lightning. Say to yourself: I want to continue undisturbed my act of love from one Communion to the next; that is my duty, my sole duty. Ahead so, forward! Nothing else.

Enlisted under the banner of unceasing love, Sister Consolata had, in her struggle for sanctity, to defend it with the same valor as the good soldier defends the flag of his country:

The unceasing act of love is your flag. Defend it against the enemy at the cost of your life. (September 9th, [illegible])

One must love, one's flag; one must defend it at all costs; love tender it; and the last thing is to give it to the enemy, so that it may never fall into enemy hands. Do the same with your act of love: it will cost you an effort; give it to Me without ceasing. (September 7th, 1936)

If she happened to interrupt the act out of human weakness, she was not to become discouraged on account of that, much less to abandon the struggle:

Raise your effort to the highest pitch and firmly determined not to lose one single act of love, take up the struggle again without casting a backward glance at the interruption.

The continuity of love was not, therefore, an infused gift for Sister Consolata. True, she had special graces inherent in

her mission, but she had to [illegible] them always with an heroic effort of the will, without stopping when the conflict became more bitter, and without losing courage over her more or less voluntary imperfections. To this Jesus spurred her on by saying:

Love Me, Consolata, without regard to the struggle and your inevitable falls. I am not to be impressed by a soul that continue unperturbed in your act of love. (September [illegible], [illegible])

Make every effort [illegible] is for your own good. It is upon the effort that I now insist, this you offer Me unceasingly an act of love. (September [illegible], [illegible])

Certainly, Jesus might have brought her in one stride to the desired peak, but He did not wish to do so. He told her quite clearly on September 26th, 1936, and this should be a lesson and encouragement to all souls:

Do you think I could not grant you this continuity of love? I could. Yet I love to see you struggle, fall, and rise again, in fact, making an effort. I like to see what you can do, and do you know what designs My [illegible]? It is when you rise above everything imperfected and continue your act of love.

Jesus desired consolation from her, as we will see later, that the heroic act of love would come to be a cross for her soul because it employed all the faculties of the soul in one continuous effort and deserved everything in the creature, even a useless thought. He encourage her on that without faith, He suggested that she give no thought to the future but live and sanctify the present moment with love:

Live for [illegible] the minute at a time. An entire day is too long for you.

In addition, Jesus promised His constant support and that of her spiritual director:

Have no fear, Consolata, when your act of love is impeded by your insistent struggle. I will send you your spiritual director.

so that you will not have to stop or delay your ascent, but you must do nothing but love continuously, even if it costs an effort, for only the continual act of love will give you the strength you need for everything. (October 14th, 1935)

One day Jesus taught Sister Consolata how she could render valuable, through an act of love, even the brief intervals between versicles and antiphons, etc., while in choir, but she doubted whether her heart would be able to sustain so intense an activity. Jesus replied:

I will strengthen it with Mine!

Above all, Jesus promised her that He would make good all deficiencies of her weak nature:

You must do your utmost to offer Me the unceasing act of love but when you fail, I will make it good. No, have no fear. I am always kind!

Therefore, Our Lord's entire workings in Sister Consolata's soul aimed at bringing her to a continuity of love and maintaining her in it. When she wondered one day whether Jesus had not exhausted His vocabulary, or His vocation any demand, she was answered:

Have no fear that I have exhausted the phrases with which to ask of you the same thing. Love, I am omnipotent, and am able to repeat the same demand unto infinity in ever changing phraseology!

Another time, when she was astonished that Jesus had not yet tired of the same demand, she heard this reply:

No, I am not tired of it, nor will I ever tire. I ask for I desire only this one thing, that you should love Me. Nothing else.

THE SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS OF THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE

Who brings souls to salvation? Not we, certainly. It is Jesus Crucified who has been saving souls and continues to save them

by applying the merits of His blood expiation. At the most, and due to His condescension, we can become cooperators in the salvation of souls in proportion to our union with Him, that is our love for him.

Everything that Saint Paul says about love as related to the supernatural value of our actions may be applied to our apostolate for the benefit of other souls. Without love, our words, whether spoken or written, would be but sounding brass and tinkling cymbals; all our knowledge would profit us nothing; our endeavors to find new ways of impressing souls. We may be preachers, public speakers, journalists, organizers, but if the charity of Our Lord does not burn within us we will never be apostles. An apostle is one who speaks and acts in the Name of Jesus, is in intimate union with Him, is influenced by the same love for God the Father and the same passionate zeal for saving souls.

The Saint Therese loved Jesus like a seraph and had the soul of an apostle. Not only that, but through love she exercised such great and so universal an apostolate as to be proclaimed Patroness of the Missions, though she never saw a mission country and never preached a sermon. The one who proclaimed her was the Church, which is guided by the Holy Spirit, who is God. This sublime lesson which God gave the world was not understood by all, but is finally to be confirmed in the soul of Sister Consolata. She too was burning with zeal because inflamed with love; she too has been given a comfortable harvest of souls in reward for her love. Here is what Jesus said to her concerning the apostolic fruitfulness of the act of love:

Remember that the act of love may derive the eternal salvation of a soul. You ought to feel remorse, therefore, over the times you have not enough zeal. Alas, I love You, my Jesus, (October 8th, 1935)

The same consoling promise was given her at other times

Do not lose time. Every act of love means a soul.

The Blessed Virgin also exhorted her in the same sense concerning the unceasing act of love:

"Only in heaven will you come to know its value and its truthfulness in saving souls."

For a number of years Sister Consolata had been praying for the conversion of her brother Nicholas and for that of her uncle Peter Viano. The former surrendered to grace at Easter Death and on the eighth of May following Jesus told her:

Remember, Consolata, that I have not given you Nicholas nor will I give you your uncle Peter, on account of your penances and sufferings, but solely because of your unceasing act of love. Remember that, for it is love that I derive from My creatures.

Nicholas died a holy death in December, and:

The act of love is also most fruitful as a prayer of reparation.

Why is it, Consolata, that I do not permit you to make so many prayers? It is because the act of love is more fruitful. Come, Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls, repent a thousand blasphemies. **(October 8th, 1935)**

The unceasing act of love also has greater value for the soul who is practicing it and is therefore more fruitful of merit than any other work.

Consolata, place at one side all the acts of virtue which you could perform today, and on the other side a single day passed in a continuous act of love. I will prefer the day passed in continuous love to anything else you might do or offer Me.

Hence, every time Sister Consolata renewed to offer to Jesus, or just with some particular homage, grace intervened and she offered an act of love from her instead. In preparation for the feast of the Immaculate Conception, 1935, Jesus suggested:

What would you like to give your heavenly Mother during her Novena? Offer her a continual Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save

[illegible] it is that you will be giving her everything.

Lastly, the act of love is most fruitful in the matter of sanctifying the vow precisely because through it we not only give everything to Jesus, but we also receive everything from Him. In commenting on the words of the Gospel "without Me you can do nothing," Jesus told her on October 20th, 1935:

This is for you the most comforting saying in the Gospel, because it excuses all your weaknesses and throws you in complete abandonment upon the Heart of God. There, dissolved in a single act of love, you may ask what you will, and it will be granted you.

For Jesus will not permit Himself to be outdone in generosity by His poor creature who is intent on loving Him continuously.

Remain fixed in this one resolve: not to interrupt the act of love that suffices for Me. Remain faithful to it, renew it hour by hour, and I will grant you everything. Consolata, trust everything.

(September 13th, 1936)

The soul who is faithful to the uninterrupted act of love will, in order to be most faithful in everything else, as Christ the Father promised Sister Consolata on September 23rd, 1935:

Look, Consolata, concentrate on your resolve to love continuously. This includes all other resolutions. If you observe this one you will be observing all the others.

Jesus gave her the reason for this:

Each of your acts of love draws faithfulness into your being, for it draws Me, who am faithfulness itself. (July 14th, [illegible])

Consolata, fixed in fidelity to all her duties and resolutions, the soul will be victorious over her passions and her enemies.

In order to always gain the victory, only one thing is necessary: never to omit one act of love. (May 30th, 1934)

Abundant will also be the fruit for sanctification.

You have attached yourself as regards your spiritual director

and have that yourself up in the one word. Yes. You obliterate yourself in Me and shut yourself up in the one phrase. Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. You will gather much fruit. (October 26th 1935)

Above all, the unceasing act of love was render the soul ready for every sacrifice asked of her.

Look, Consolata, concentrate upon me, unceasing Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. It is the one and only resolution which will give you the strength to reply with a yes to My every request for sacrifice. (September 24th 1935)

And again, on December 1st 1935:

Do you know why I tell you to continue such in this way. It is because by keeping you always united to Me, this continuity of love makes you ready for everything at any moment.

In order to suffer well, it is necessary to love deeply, as has already been said. It is all very easy to believe otherwise. A lot of experience with other souls and with oneself will suffice to prove that it is not sacrifice which brings about love, but love which brings one to sacrifice, that is to a sacrifice which is accepted, carried out and accelerated up with joy and that keeping such a sacrifice then becomes food for love. That is why Jesus told Sister Consolata on October 9th 1935:

Consolata, prepare yourself for suffering through love. Love continuously. And, if you were ever to cease loving.

Jesus reminides her frequently of her state of soul in order to induce her to persevere in the continuity of her love. Thus, on November 24th 1935:

I know that the continuity of love costs you something, just occasionally at certain times. But, I am more mindful, Consolata. And then you must never forget that I have to see you to be a victim of love.[1]

We will see in the following chapter how this continuity of

was reassured to Sister Consolata through the unceasing act of love and how it made the solemn promise come true which Jesus made her one day

Consolata! I swear that I will lead you to every height of love and of sorrow but as for you Jesus Mary, I love You Save souls Nothing else!

5

PERFECTING THE LIFE OF LOVE THROUGH PERFECTING THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE

PREFACE

A few words are necessary here in order that souls who wish to follow Sister Consolata and strive for that highest perfection in the way of love to which God called her, do not become frightened and conclude that it is something impossible and not meant for them.

Let us note, therefore, in the first place, we ought not to be astonished that Jesus should have called us to the highest perfection, for He has let us know through the Gospel: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect." An impossible goal? And yet it was proposed to us by Jesus Himself, and it teaches us that on the path to sanctification, he says, never reaches a point where she may slacken her efforts. We are not dispensed from striving toward the peak with all our strength, even though it be impossible to attain it.

In the second place it must be observed that just because Jesus proposed such a sublime height to Sister Consolata, this

Matthew 5:48

does not imply that she attained it absolutely and definitely so that there remained nothing more for her to do. We have pointed out again and again that throughout her entire life she never laid down her weapons in the good fight, and this stands to reason that she never felt herself to have reached the highest peak, though the one she did attain was certainly very high.

From this follows — and this is the third observation — that in the spiritual life it is not the success which counts, for this depends mostly upon God, but rather the earnest and determined effort made by the creature in the relentless struggle always sustained by grace, for that must not be lacking. This grace, however, is not granted to all in equal measure, but in accordance with God's inscrutable designs. Now, since Sister Consolata was chosen by God to show the world the road to the increasing act of love, it is easy to understand why God should have favoured her with extraordinary graces in proportion to her vocation and mission, so as to present her as a model to souls who would be called to follow her.

It is clear, therefore, that the divine demands as contained in the present chapter must not be thought to apply in the same measure to all souls, even among those who are called to follow the same path. It suffices for them to keep their eyes fixed upon the model supplied them by God in Sister Consolata, to respond generously to grace, to try to imitate her to the best of their ability, and to keep always in mind that God does not reward the result but the effort.

CONTINUITY OF LOVE IN THE INCREASING ACT OF LOVE

Besides the purity with which one loves God for His own sake, the perfection of love consists above all in its effective and really in actual love, not merely habitual love. That must

therefore, be the goal toward which the soul should strive if she wishes to perfect herself more and more in the life of love. And how, or with what means, may this be achieved? Jesus uses Sister Consolata to point out to us the practical means, one which is accessible to all souls of good will, the ordinary act of love.

On August 22, 1945, the Lord has her write, speaking:

Through your contact with Me, which results from the act of love, you will discern the little defects which might tend to detach you from this divine union, and you will drive them away. In this manner your entire day will become one continuous chain of love from the moment you arise until you fall asleep, and it will even continue into eternity.

At another time Our Lord referred to the fact that she was enjoying His sensible presence, and, as usual, He details His intellectual, under the form of the Sacred Heart or as the Crucified Christ:

Not only is your cell for you a sanctuary where you can always find Jesus, the Sacred Heart or the Crucified, but, in fact, your self should be a tabernacle wherever you may be. And just as you do not walk around in the continual act of prayer, [illegible] you must not permit anything that the continual act of prayer to be lost. You, no matter where you may be or in what work you may be engaged. (October 2[illegible], 1945)

The second section which Jesus has suggested to her had the other purpose, as we have already pointed out, than to insure the continuity of the act of love, in speaking of recreation. He said:

You see, Consolata, as long as you dwell in Me by the continuous act of love, you are living a marvelous divine life. Then you believe in all the future which has been revealed to you, and no doubt can then disturb your soul. But if you leave Me during recreation and become involved in conversation with creatures, then you too will feel yourself to be merely a poor creature, and after

recreation a doubt will enter your soul whether all these great things which you are experiencing in yourself might not be an illusion. Therefore you must never again leave Me for a creature, not even for twenty minutes. Love Me in your heart even while you are giving a needed reply. November 12th, 1935)

Here one might well ask to what point Sister Consolata attained the intensity of her love. For a human being, an effective and absolute intensity is not possible without being especially privileged by God, as was the case with the Blessed Virgin Mary. The most great of Virgins, writes Saint Bernardine de Bustis, actually loved God continuously and always through a singular privilege." Saint Joseph may also have been blessed in this way, but in a different degree of intensity. As for Sister Consolata, we would say that just as Jesus never tired of asking from her the unceasing act of love, so she never ceased in her efforts to shape it as perfectly as possible to the divine request.

Speaking of the continuity of the act of love in her diary under the date of September 20th, 1935, she records the following words of Jesus:

You see, since the day of your clothing you have not yet succeeded in giving Me always that which I have requested. On some days, yes, but only on a few.

From this we can see that five years after her clothing Sister Consolata had succeeded in actually offering Jesus the act of love on certain days without ceasing. There were still some gaps in the greater number of days; they were of very short duration and hardly ever voluntary. Nevertheless, even these had to disappear, for Jesus asked:

Now, what do you need in order to give Me this continual act of love? You need the twofold exercise of thought and word to want everyone, and to see and treat Me in everyone. I will think through you, I will speak through you, I will write through you.

but you must be intent solely on loving Me and living Me always! That should be your one and only thought from the time of your rising in the morning until you fall asleep at night.

Jesus insisted particularly on purity of mind as being necessary for practicing the unceasing act of love, and explained:

The act of love is like a train traveling along on its track, but if the track is cluttered up with useless thoughts, then the train cannot go on but must come to a stop. You see then how necessary the immaculate purity of mind is for you. No, not another thought, not even one. But what peace results from this! Consolata, is it not true? Calme must be in your mind. November 7th, 1935

The soul who has consecrated herself to Love through the unceasing act of love must, therefore, put this external and internal silence into practice without scruples but with generosity and firmness. She must keep ever present the thought of how precious a thing an act of love is, and how the words which Jesus addressed to Sister Consolata on September 4th, 1935 apply also to her:

Consolata, *I have concentrated all the time which remains to you in this life into one single act of love. Now, if you were to stop loving in order to follow some other thought or after some sentence which is not strictly necessary, you would be committing a theft of love.*

Such a perfect continuity of love gradually establishes in the soul a state of immolation. Jesus did not conceal this from Sister Consolata:

Consolata, *Jesus took the cross upon His shoulders and proceeded to Calvary. Do you know in what your cross consists? In not losing one act of love. From now on this shall be your one and only program. The act of love, well it is not a cross, but never to omit one under any circumstances, that is a cross. However, I will aid you in carrying all other crosses.*

I give you as your cross never to lose one single Jesus. Mary,

I love Your Sacred Heart. But I also give you the grace to carry this cross faithfully until your dying day. I love you, Consolata. This cross which I lay upon your shoulders, destroys everything in you and brings you at the same time to a scrupulous observance of every little point in your rule, the constitution, and the directives. (November 15th, 1935)

Jesus returned to the same thought on the next day and added:

Do you like the cross which I have bestowed on you? Are you content? You must know that it is a very fruitful one. The cross of love is more fruitful than any other cross for Me and for souls.

It is precisely by means of this silent but ceaseless immolation of love that Sister Consolata achieved her status of a victim of love. She offered herself as a victim in response to a divine request on the day of her solemn profession, April 8th, 1934. For Jesus did not allow her to consecrate herself as a victim until the First Friday, December 1935. How and why come about and what were her obligations? Simply this: Jesus confirmed her solemnly in the continuity of love, and she gave her consent.

On the eve of the First Friday during the Holy Hour Jesus told her in preparation for the new act of consecration:

Consolata, does not My thirst for love and My request for reparation for your Brothers and Sisters tell you everything? Yes, I have given you everything, now you must give Me everything, all your love, and even heartbeat, in one unceasing act of love. I desire nothing else, for only by that unceasing act of love do you give Me everything, everything, for yourself and for your Brothers. Here is where I wish you to show Me your fidelity and generosity by completely renouncing every thought, every word, so as never to interrupt your act of love. You must love Me always and accept all consequences, but never interrupt the act of love. I know that

this will gradually consume and immolate My Consolata. That is what it means to be a victim of love.

Then, as reply to the natural perplexity of the victim who was pained by her little involuntary inhibitions to love and feared she would not truly correspond to the divine plan, Jesus added with divine tenderness:

No, Consolata, no! My omnipotence is great, and grace will enable you to give Me what I ask of you. Do you wish My blessing in order to free your will and render you constant in persevering to the end without ever again interrupting this act of love with a thought or a word? So be it. I give you My blessing. You will never again interrupt it. That is My gift to you on this first Friday in November.

On the following morning Jesus carried out the consecration He had announced. But everything took place within the very depth of her soul, and nothing extraordinary showed itself externally. Jesus told her:

This day do I consecrate you as a victim of love. I do not wound you with a dart, but I inflame you in silence. Now you can no longer interrupt your act of love even if you wished to. What time is left you to live from today to your last hour is united with this unceasing act of love. Believe Me, with that you give Me everything. Yes, Consolata, we will despise and trample under foot every obstacle, and we will love always and unceasingly until your last breath. Yes, for that I will be responsible.

The responsibility which Jesus assumed for the continuity of her love did not mean that her will was in peaceful possession of that continuity. That could never be. Nevertheless, enveloped in the consecrating flame of love, she henceforth felt herself stronger in the holocaust of love. In fact, she thought nothing could ever stop the unceasing act of love on the least of the Sacred Heart. Still, Jesus had desired it, and she prepared

herself with a fervent Novena and meditated each day on one of Father Mateo Crawley's discourses for Religious. A vow of this kind was certainly not to be taken lightly, that she knew well. For she daily experienced what it cost nature not to lose one act of love throughout one whole day. At the beginning of her Novena she wrote, June 11th, 1930:

This morning I was alone in the workroom, but felt myself united to the Heart of Jesus. Though longing to bind myself to Him with a vow never to lose an act of love, after receiving permission from my spiritual director, my nature seemed to resist this vow which would crucify it completely. I began to understand that the unceasing act of love gives everything to God because it immolates all thoughts, words, gestures, etc. It is death to nature."

There was not a case of passing enthusiasm, but the conviction of a lasting vow, of which she received confirmation from Jesus Himself. On June 4th, during one of the absolutely sanctifying conferences, her spirit was struck by this passage: "Be valiant, dear Mary Most Holy, learn to sing especially when you are in pain, with Jesus." At the same time she heard Jesus whispering in her heart:

That is the way I desire you to be, and for that reason you will bind yourself to Me with a vow never to lose one act of love on Friday, when I love and immolate you completely. That is the way I wish you to be, always to be.

In the evening of June 18th, the vigil of the feast, she offered the momentous vow.

"This evening, while in chapel, the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. The thought occurred to me that one offers gifts on the eve of a feast. Tomorrow is His feast, that of the Sacred Heart. The meditation spoke of a Heart which had loved me so much and from whom I received nothing but ingratitude. My unworthiness was not really to offer the vow which had

been asked of me. I implored the aid of my holy patrons and then, through the intercession of my Immaculate Mother and Saint Joseph, and with complete trust in the Heart of Jesus, I vowed the unceasing act of love which was to continue without relaxation, even at table, at work, or at recreation. Then an innermost and tranquil joy flooded my soul, and a confidence that it would be given me to persevere, and many other blessings. Jesus, I trust in You!"

Note the extent which Sister Consolata gave to her vow that the act of love should be so "unceasing" as never to be relaxed at any time of the day. That certainly requires a particular call from God, which is just what the vocation to love is, and a very special grace. He could not deny it to this soul whom He had chosen for the purpose of showing the world the doctrine and practice of the unceasing act of love.

This does not detract from the fact that her vow was something more than simply bearing the cross. It means remaining on the cross so as to complete the holocaust of love there. On May 23rd, 1931, Sister Consolata writes:

Today, feeling a continual thirst for suffering, and this evening, on going to rest, I heard these words: *Oh, if you could know the great value of one act of love!* I came to understand that I will be consumed by the unceasing act of love, and so everything will be accomplished.

That was indeed the case, and after her vow Jesus told her:

Now it is no more a case of carrying the cross, but of living upon the cross and of persevering on the cross with the unceasing act of love. (Consolata, July 8th, 1931)

All this required heroism, but Sister Consolata was not one to dread the summit.

Is my faithfulness to the unceasing act of love heroic? No. Then what right have I to make it so? The divine reply was

You must will strongly will always will it to be so (September 16th, 1936)

This was the real program for Sister Consolata's spiritual life: a program which she summed up in these words: "To truly love You, O Jesus, means to die rather than to permit one useless thought to enter; to die rather than to pronounce one sentence which has not been demanded or is really necessary; to die rather than to interrupt the act of love."

She was utterly sincere in what she said and wrote.

PURITY OF LOVE IN THE ACT OF LOVE

In the preceding paragraphs it has been shown that the unceasing act of love cannot be carried out unless the soul maintains a rigorous silence of thought and word. Now we must add that the unceasing act of love is to turn a very great aid, in fact, for the greater number of souls it is indispensable in maintaining the virginal purity of mind and not permitting it to wander. It is the same with the heart by not letting it dwell upon anything earthly; and therefore, also the same with speech: by keeping the soul in a continual virtuous silence. On this point also, the divine instructions to Sister Consolata are very clear. Jesus told her on September 16th, 1936, concerning the purity of mind and speech:

It is necessary for you to have such a mastery over your thoughts and over your speech that the devil can achieve nothing against you any more; such a mastery is facilitated by the act of love.

Concerning the purity of heart He told her on December 1st, 1935:

Only the continuity of the act of love can insure the virginal purity of your heart.

To that end Jesus not only demanded of Sister Consolata the continuity of the act of love, but even the virginal purity of the act of love: she was not to lose one heartfelt act of love throughout the day, and even more, she was never to take her mind off it.

This is true and perfect virginal purity of love.

As early as October 7th, 1935, Jesus had put her on her guard against the plotting of the enemy concerning the continuity of her act of love:

Take notice: What the enemy wants to keep you from is the continual act of love. That is the reason for all this assaulting struggle of thoughts. Any thought satisfies him, even a good one, so long as it keeps you from loving Me!

Then, on December 8th, 1935, He explained more clearly in what virginal purity of love consists:

Do you know in what the purity of your act of love consists? In not intermingling with it one other single thought. For it is possible for you to be loving with the heart and yet be thinking of something else with the mind at the same time. The purity of the act of love excludes every other thought and requires a virginal purity of mind. Do you understand? That is how I desire the act of love from you. But have no fear: I will assist you to offer it in all its purity. And so, by not permitting anything else to enter, you give Me, by loving, everything!

And He explained further how thoughts which are not related to love can mar the purity of the act of love:

You see, even in good thoughts which creep in, there is always a bit of self-love, of complacency, and it is easy to see how they will spoil the act of love. But if you will have complete trust in Me, that I am attending to everything and will continue to do so, and if you will not permit even one other thought to enter, then your act of love will possess a virginal purity.

When Sister Consolata made a virginal promise that she

wished to be faithful in maintaining the purity of her act of love. Jesus encouraged her with these words:

You promise Me original purity in love, and I promise you in turn its scrupulous observance. December 8th, 1935.

Jesus later confirmed her through grace in the continuity and purity of her love, but not even so singular a favor brought her freedom from struggle or dispensed her from employing every possible spiritual force.

By confirm you through grace in the original purity of love you must not think that it will cost you no further effort to love. My Confirmation confirming you in grace does not preclude struggle and effort. December 5th, 1935.

Now, to struggle means to suffer, and for Sister Consolata this meant continual suffering since the struggle also was continuous. But how precious is the fruit of pure love, purity of suffering. The soul who is thus established in an unceasing act of pure love is able to make of the fragrance of her suffering an incense, [illegible] without dissipating its intensity, ascends to as a largesse turning back upon herself, and that without ever being aware, even as of a virtue, some of those studied attitudes which are all directed to victim souls in [illegible] are there [illegible]. Jesus confirmed all this when He said on December 9th, 1935:

You see, original purity of love parallels virginity of mind. When a soul establishes herself in this virginity of love, nothing can stirring or disturbing her any further; she will be confirmed in peace as in love.

Behold the Blessed Virgin at the foot of the Cross. She suffers, yes, but what dignity in her suffering! Can you see her? In a sea of anguish, not one lament. She does not become despondent or discouraged, nothing of the kind. She accepts and suffers; she offers it all up with calmness and strength, even to the consummation of love. That is the way I wish you to be in the days of sorrow.

the original purity of your love will help you [illegible]

[illegible] 8:34, Jesus gave us the means [illegible] purity [illegible] establishes a state so perfect and such a peace

Amen, amen, I say to you, that whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.[8] *And so with one, if you permit one thought to enter, [illegible] you pronounce one sentence that is not in reply to a question, then you will remain a slave to your [illegible]. The servant is [illegible] after [illegible] weighed [illegible] after [illegible] you live, you are obliged to [illegible], and you do not know how to rise again except by having recourse to [illegible]. [illegible], if you resist the temptation and are faithful, then you are [illegible] free and strong and ready for all manner of suffering. Do you understand [illegible]? Remember this.*

Together with strength in suffering, original purity also assures [illegible] the soul [illegible] which no one and nothing can take from her [illegible] peace.

[illegible] of the will [illegible] of the [illegible] you [illegible] you remain in original purity [illegible] of peace and of heart, then suffering will [illegible] you [illegible] make you suffer nothing else [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] December [illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] expresses [illegible] another trait of the purity of [illegible] which is that [illegible] the soul [illegible] extreme purity [illegible]

You see, what you are living [illegible] the enemy cannot enter with a single bad thought because all your faculties are absorbed in loving [illegible] [illegible]

The same [illegible]

This unceasing act of love procures for you the triple virginity of the heart, the body, and the spirit. [illegible] 13th, 1930

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[8] John 8:34

That is why because to this to His greatest [illegible] Jesus communicates His own virginal purity to the soul that is so intimately united with Him

[illegible] virginal purity of mind yes in Me alone [illegible] purity of heart yes in Me alone [illegible] Purity of suffering for Me alone [illegible] Purity of speech speak only with Me [illegible] virginity of the heart the body and the spirit November 25th 1935

In truth how great must be the purity of a soul who from dawning to night and evenings holds all her faculties centered on one continuous and virginal act of love What Jesus told Sister [illegible] on November 30th 1935 holds true for all souls

Virginal purity of mind renders you beautiful and immaculate The continuous act of love makes you fervent the way I desire you to be?

With these lessons on the purity of love Jesus was preparing Sister Consolata for her vow of virginal pure love We quote from her diary on August 5th 1936

[illegible] me to understand this Jesus thirsts for love Now [illegible] quench that thirst with impure water would be an outrage which the heart of a bride cannot permit therefore my act of love which has to quench the thirst of Jesus must at least such purity as not to allow any admixture of even thoughts even good ones nothing absolutely nothing will be entertained My one and only preoccupation shall be to think of Jesus He has given me to understand that during these days He has been preparing me for the vow of increasing virginal love which excludes even other thoughts even a good one and even any sentence which is not strictly necessary I have understood to be His will that I should offer this vow this evening I have placed it in His Sacred Heart When He asked me what I desired in exchange I replied Fidelity to observe this vow even death It was made clear to me that He was assuming the responsibility of making me observe it

As may be readily seen, it was a case of two vows of unbeatitude of difficulty and of the highest perfection. To simplify matters, her spiritual director later united the preceding vows into a single one which embraced all the others: the vow of the unceasing act of virginal love. She had to concentrate all her efforts not only on the continuity of the act of love but upon its virginal purity, and that without ever relaxing her complete self-surrender at any time of the day. That meant indeed being a victim of love. She wrote on January 1st, 1936:

"What Jesus is to me, that I also want to be to Him: a little victim, radiating immaculate purity of mind, tongue and heart."

That she had indeed become one, was assured her by Jesus on July 19th, 1936:

"*You are now a victim, consecrated to Love through Infinite Love!*"

INTENSITY OF LOVE IN THE ACT OF LOVE

This is the third requirement for perfect love: to give it the greatest possible intensity. "You shall love the Lord your God . . . with your whole strength."[1] If we ought to love our neighbor as Jesus loved us, how much more ought we to love Jesus in order to reciprocate His love. Saint Bernard teaches that the only measure of our love of God is to love Him beyond measure. That wish to love Jesus as no one has ever loved Him is found in every saint, and it ought also to be found in every soul, at least by desire and endeavor.

Jesus loved Sister Consolata with an intense predilection, and this she returned with a most ardent love. We cannot enumerate here all the extraordinary graces and sublime gifts which

1 Mark 12:30

Jesus bestowed upon her, but we limit ourselves to a few short quotations which refer most closely to the unceasing act of love. He told her on November 14th, 1830:

Consolata: henceforth we must not merely strive to avoid defects, but our efforts must aim at loving Jesus even to the extremes of love, wish to be ardently loved by you.

Can a soul arrive at that? Yes, with the grace of God, and by what means does one arrive at so intense a love? By the unceasing act of love. On May 22nd, 1831, Jesus made Sister Consolata feel His pressing invitation:

Love Me, Consolata, love Me deeply.

And when she inquired how she could come to love Him deeply, He replied:

Through the unceasing act of love one comes to love Me deeply.

Also a few days later, on August 2nd:

Through the unceasing act of love you will love Me ardently.

Everything tends to add intensity to this act, and as a result, in fact, the Blessed Virgin so instructed Sister Consolata, as we may judge from an entry in her diary dated July 14th, 1831:

During recreation it had been stated that she loves Jesus most who makes the most sacrifices. While pondering over these words during this evening's meditation, I became saddened because I do not make any great sacrifices for Jesus, and yet I have a burning desire to love Him ardently. Am I not, therefore, a poor, wretched being? I raised my eyes to the statue of the Blessed Virgin and, as regards me, and as regards everything, this great shot through me: what great things has Our Lady done during her earthly sojourn at Nazareth! And yet no creature will ever surpass her in her love of Jesus. While I was thinking of her and desiring to imitate her, I heard these words: In order to love Jesus deeply, you must do everything possible to make your unceasing act of love as intense as possible.

From the fact that God Himself has to intervene and moderate Sister Consolata's burning impetuousness, it may be inferred that she actually did love as intensely as is humanly possible through her unceasing act of love. God the Father told her on November 29th, 1935:

Remain calm also in your act of love. For if you do not proceed with calmness but force your heart, the latter will become exhausted and will not be able to continue with its song. You must not think that it is a waste of time when it is more calm. Calmness secures its continuity. Do you understand? Love is a fire in itself. Permit it to consume quietly. My little victim, love in peace. Let love consume you softly, not with turn and vehemence, for that would wreck whatever you had kept you from delighting Me with your song.

Jesus exhorted her in the same sense on another occasion. She was using the sewing machine, and even if it was her intention to have every stitch an act of love, she tried to make the machine work too fast so as to perform more acts of love. However, she was soon forced to stop, for in her haste she had sewed the hem crookedly. Thereupon Jesus inspired her to proceed with calmness and drew a lesson from the incident:

You see, Consolata, it is the same with your act of love. If you continue to love Me with calmness, you will be able to offer Me this unceasing act of love. On the other hand, if you force your heart to love Me impetuously, you will be obliged to stop, for you will lack the strength to continue.

We would have to reproduce the greater part of her letters and the most fervent exclamations in her diary in order to portray the act of love which gradually grew up in the heart of this generous virtim through the unceasing act of love. It is a [illegible] to [illegible] a [illegible] of love suffered physical. From [illegible] 4th 1936, she wrote:

"This evening I was able to remain for a little while before the blessed tabernacle. (My poor heart is beginning to be consumed and cannot contain all the desires and outbursts of love.) I felt myself pervaded by an infinite urge to love Jesus, who loves me ardently, with a love of equal ardor, and as I repeated to Jesus the infinite desire to love Him, I felt within my heart another heart, the Sacred Heart, that was able to reach itself into the Infinite without destroying nature."

LOVE OF ABANDONMENT AND THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE

This is the highest expression of the life of love and the logical conclusion of what has been said so far. The act of love ought to be so unceasing that not one act would be wrongly lost throughout the day; it ought to be so virginally pure that no other thought would enter. To attain this it is necessary for the soul to carry her faith in love so high as to abandon herself to love like a leaf before the breeze. In other words, it is necessary to abandon herself so irrevocably to love as to renounce not only every thought of other creatures, but even every thought of herself. It means to obliterate herself, to die to herself — a difficult matter, and one which is little understood by the majority of souls — but it is therefore no less necessary if Jesus is to have freedom of action within the soul.

When speaking of the life of love in general, we already pointed out that to forget oneself and to abandon oneself to God does not imply that the soul should neglect her own spiritual development and relax into blameworthy indifference; the soul should avoid proceeding according to her own whims and preferences; instead, she should comply with the workings of Jesus in the soul with simplicity and docility. Our Lord's watchword to all souls whom He calls to high perfection in the path of love is simply this: *Allow Me to do it.*

Yes, let Jesus do it! And why not? Has anyone else the sanctification of the soul more at heart than He? Is anyone else able to sanctify her? Who can perceive her real needs as well as He? Only Him alone are known the designs which God has for the soul. Being omnipotent, He can do everything; being faithfulness itself, He will keep all His promises.

Why then should one not entrust oneself to Him and give Him a free hand so that He can work in the soul as absolute and jealous Master? Why not submit to Him one's own opinions, one's thoughts, aspirations, desires, preoccupations? Why not adapt oneself, trusting, at each moment, to His actions which alone are always sanctifying? That is what Jesus desired from Sister Consolata on September 23rd, 1935:

You see, Consolata, sanctity means self-forgetfulness in everything, in thoughts, desires, words, deeds. We do it all, we work everything, but we should at every moment give Me what *I ask for with much love!*

Love of a unique moment, therefore, expresses itself in practice by doing love in speaking to the multitude. Jesus reminded them that it was written by the Prophet: "They shall all be taught of God."[1] Jesus is the sole teacher of all souls. Neither be called masters, for one is your Master, Christ.[2] He is the Master who possesses the knowledge of sanctity in an infinite degree, and He wants to and is able to communicate it to the soul. But the soul must then herself be instructed and must execute with promptness every divine command, in wish, no matter whether it be pleasing or painful, and without regard to the manner in which it is man tested. Thus Jesus told Sister Consolata on September 24th, 1935:

Consolata, I have every claim upon you. But you have only

[1] Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45.

[2] Matthew 23:10.

one does to obey Me. I require a docile soul which permits Me to act, which submits to everything, which trusts in Me and serves Me, studying in peace and joy, no matter what the situation is.

Jesus is God, and whatever He does, He does as God, that is, He does everything divinely well and for the greatest benefit of the soul, even though the soul does not always perceive within herself the divine workings and their results.

Let Me do everything! You will see that I will do everything well, and that My little victim will become healthy in love and holiness. (November 8th, 1935)

Love, and love only, that can bring the soul to this complete and trusting abandonment. For how could the soul renounce her thoughts, desires, and personal preoccupations if she did not entrust herself to Love and permit all thoughts, desires, and preoccupations to be consumed in love. It is Jesus who is ready to do everything, if we let Him do the work. He does so precisely because at the moment that we entrate, pertaining Him. This He confirmed to Sister Faustina in November 8th, 1935:

I delight to work in a soul. You see, I have to do everything. My soul, and from this soul I ask only that he love Me.

Many souls fall into the error of believing that they can sanctify themselves, they want to do it themselves instead of leaving it to Jesus, they wish to select the path, the means, in short, they wish to instruct the Master. He is the true sanctifier. A soul is more quickly and completely sanctified by Him, the more she has succeeded in eliminating the obstacles of herself in the path of holiness, and the more she shows herself docile to the touch of the divine Master. For that, it has a sense to ask how the gifts of the Holy Spirit work. From this, it becomes easy to understand correctly the words which Jesus addresses to Faustina. (Cracow, on August 22nd, 1934)

Think no longer about yourself, about your perfection, on how to attain to sanctity, or about your defects, your present and fu

have troubles. No, I will see to your sanctification, to your salvation. You must henceforth think only of Me and of souls, of Me to love Me, and of souls to save them.'

And that is precisely what she did by means of the unceasing virginal act of love: love and souls, nothing else. The unceasing act of love is therefore not only a most efficacious means for perfecting love in that it is continual, pure, and intense, but it is also a simple means for arriving at the perfect love of abandonment. Jesus told Sister Consolata on October 15th, 1935:

Let Me do everything. Act as though only I existed. Of your self there should remain only the continual act of love and an extreme desire to do simply and always whatever I desire, speech or silence, through your superior or your Sisters.

When a soul renounces herself and her own thoughts in order to offer to Jesus an unceasing and virginal pure act of love, Jesus takes upon Himself the care of that soul. And He is more loving than an earthly mother, when she presses her offspring to her heart in an effusion of love.

Follow Me with an unceasing act of love: do everything, hour by hour, minute by minute. I will attend to everything else, I will provide for everything. (May Past, 1936)

Sister Consolata exhibited a marvelous activity. Her ambition was throughout each day to place herself at the service of all. She did not lack work: she was secretary, cook, porter, shoemaker, and was always ready to be of assistance to anyone. Now and then it happened that she became uneasy lest so many different duties might keep her from doing justice to everything, but with such words as on Jesus' admonishes her:

Leave everything else in you be silent. Only Jesus, Mary, love Jesus. Sister, sister, I feel very assured that I am thinking of everything and making every provision, even to finding the time for repairing the sandals. You see, it is the devil who is trying to over-

whelm you with work and cause you anxiety about all the various demands made upon you simultaneously. No, I am thinking of everything, and I will also let you find the necessary time for everything. (September 8th, 1936)

During her last years she had a presentiment of her approaching death, and it was only natural that she would ponder over the circumstances which would surround it. But on March 21st, 1942, Jesus told her:

I want you to complete abandonment in Me. As for the day, the hour, and the minute of your death, Jesus, the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph are thinking of that and preparing for it. You should concentrate solely upon loving Me and on saving souls.

We know from Our Lord's words, which we have already quoted (October 8th, 1935), that Sister Consolata achieved a high degree of abandonment to Love through her unceasing virginal act of love:

Consolata, I am pleased with you because I am able to do as I wish, and this I do when I am working within you.

We can also learn from her notes. We will quote here a few of her thoughts and resolutions which confirm and illustrate this important fact and put into clear relief the interior [illegible] of this soul toward the workings of grace:

I must forget myself. I must never think or be preoccupied about myself, nor ever demand that others should think of me. Jesus will take care of everything.

I die and I do exist any more. If I think about myself, if I have even a good thought, I preoccupate myself. If I speak about myself even in indifferent matters, that does not mean to die but to preserve life within me. And all that shows a lack of confidence in Jesus, as though He would not think or provide for Consolata down to the very smallest detail.

I must remember that, by the merciful choice of God, I am a victim of love. Now a victim is a being which has been

set apart. Jesus has sacrificed everything and has left me nothing but the wound in His Side and the increasing act of love. The victim must be dead to everything and to herself; she must have but one occupation and one preoccupation: solely and always to love. Toward everything else: oblivion and indifference. O Jesus, grant that I may live this life like a true victim of love, that I may love this state and be generous, denying You nothing, no thought, no word, no act, if virginal love. O Jesus, **I place my trust in You!"**

Thanks to God, I was given to understand that Jesus longed to have me carry my trust to extremes, in short, to abandon my soul completely and not to give her any further thought. It is possible that God could not suffice for Consolata? Could Consolata not place her trust so completely in God as to abandon her own soul entirely to Him without further thought or preoccupation? Yes, I must let Him act and live within me without giving a thought to time or anything else, nothing, nothing, solely and always I must sing that love Him as though I did not exist any more and in the place of Consolata there existed solely this act of increasing love.

Sister Consolata bound herself to this life of perfect abandonment to the will of God and with the consent of her spiritual director on the feast of the Sacred Heart in 1943, using **the following formula:**

"O Sacred Heart of Jesus, through the heart of our heavenly Mother, I offer a vow of complete abandonment to Jesus to fulfill our will in the certainty that You will think of everything even to the minutest details. And I promise Jesus complete self-effacement, thoughts, desires, etc., to attend solely to offering Jesus the increasing act of virginal love, to see You in everything, and to have always a yes, ready for everything. O Jesus, **I place my trust in You!"**

Sister Consolata's heroic fidelity to this vow prepared for

her a profound and unshakable spiritual peace even in her incessant struggle.

I can no longer ask anything else from Jesus but that His holy will be accomplished. I feel myself so indifferent, so extraneous to everything, that I dare compare myself to a babe sleeping on the Sacred Heart. Since the day when I abandoned myself to Him and begged Him please to take complete charge of my soul, I have been enjoying an enviable peace and experiencing a constant joy. Jesus, looks of everything, of absolutely everything, so that I have nothing more to wish for. At present, the fate of abandonment even removes the pain of discouragement when I realize that I am giving God nothing, absolutely nothing.

In reality, she was giving everything with her unceasing and virginal act of love, with her "yes" to everything and everybody.

In this perfect abandonment to Love, in this incessant crucifixion, he saved souls. Sister Consolata suffered, laboured, and lived. Even on her death bed, where her body was racked with pain and her spirit groaned in the anxieties of utter darkness, this generous victim soul never interrupted her canticle of original love. With her last breath, her "Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls!" reached heaven and perpetuated itself there in conformity with what Jesus had promised her.

Your act of love will not cease with your death but will continue to all eternity in heaven. (November 7th, [illegible])

6

THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE IN THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF SISTER CONSOLATA

THE ACT OF LOVE AND VOCAL PRAYER

We have already explained what love means in the life of the soul. Now let us examine more closely a few points about the unceasing act of love itself.

Above all, what can be said about the unceasing act of love in relation to the many and varied vocal prayers? Sister Consolata was a prayerful soul. In her writings she speaks again and again of her soul's immense need to become and remain absorbed in prayer. Her life is a practical example of how a soul can put into practice the Gospel precept: "We ought always to pray and not to lose heart." Her sanctity is a concrete proof of the omnipotence of humble, trusting, and constant prayer. The first Fridays of each month, for example, were her great feast days, for then she was permitted to pass as much as eight hours in adoration before Jesus solemnly exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus Himself had told her on March 31st, 1934:

Prayer shall be your fortress.

For this reason she clung ardently to the community exercises of piety, and this also from a love of regularity, observance, and good example. She had well understood and taken to heart the admonition which Jesus had given her one day:

Everything that distracts you from pious practices such as Holy Mass, Communion, the Divine Office, meditation, is not good and proceeds not from Me!

But outside of these pious exercises which were made in common, and the Way of the Cross which she made every morning upon arriving early in choir, and sometimes also in her cell in the evening, she practiced neither or hardly any vocal prayer. Vocal prayer was for her spirit almost a torment. Her soul stood in need of one thing only: love. And in the unceasing act of love she found what is contained in other prayer forms. Jesus too reminds us: "When you are praying, speak not much as the heathens. For they think that in their much speaking they may be heard."[1] Sister Marguerite at once wrote to her spiritual director:

"The sweet passage: 'He that eats My Flesh and drinks My Blood abides in Me,' and shall live by Me,' brings me immense pleasure, for it gives me the sweet certainty that by my act of love I am living and throbbing in the Sacred Heart and that I will live there eternally. I see that I am living in Him and that this act of love attaches me eternally to Him, soaring high above everything, above myself and everything that surrounds me. But the joy that derives from this intimacy, often disturbed by vocal prayers, keeps my poor soul shut through with distractions. As you see, Father, love has simplified everything, even a soul, which is extremely active, may enjoy complete repose by means of her unceasing act of love."

[1] Matthew 6:7
[2] John 6:57-58

As Saint Thomas puts it: "The soul really and truly sins her life when she carries out the divine intentions in her regard."[illegible]

Sister Consolata's personal experience is that of even souls who has attained a high degree of unitive love. So it is not to be wondered at that she resolved [illegible] must not interrupt the act of love in order to ejaculate prayers. Jesus knows all my intentions. Was she mistaken or correct in this? The divine teaching [illegible] was that she was pursuing the right path for being [illegible] but one day that her [illegible] to ejaculate prayers was [illegible] by a [illegible] she complained:

"Jesus, I do not know how to pray."

Our Lord calmed her by saying:

Tell Me what more beautiful prayer do you want to offer Me? [illegible] Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. [illegible] *What more beautiful prayer could you desire* [illegible]"[illegible]

Mother Abbess, having noticed how Sister Consolata spent herself in work to the detriment of her health, [illegible] opportune to dispense her from certain duties so as to afford her more time for prayer. The good Sister wished [illegible] others, but felt incapable of praying more vocal prayers and so hastened to the feet of the divine Master.

"O Jesus, teach me to pray!" This was His reply:

You think you do not know how to pray? What prayer is more beautiful and more acceptable to Me than the act of love? Do you know what Jesus is doing in the tabernacle? He is loving the Father and He is loving souls. That will be your vocation: nothing else, but love. Love that love. So, to the same [illegible] my dear, do not add any prayers, no, no, no. Gaze upon the tabernacle and love in that way. (November [illegible])

[illegible] Summa Theologiae I, 18, 4 ad. 3

Jesus referred again on December 12th, 1935 to vocal prayers in addition to those prescribed by the rule:

I prefer one of your acts of love to all your prayers.

He also explained — and this is important and comforting to all who will be following Sister Consolata in that same path — that the invocation on behalf of souls, as contained in the formula of the unceasing act of love, extends to all souls:

Jesus: Mary, I love You. Save souls! This comprises all the souls in purgatory and those in the church Militant, the innocent and the penitent souls, the dying, the Godless, etc. (June 7th, 1944.)

Let us repeat once more that the practice of the unceasing act of love does not in any way preclude the prayers prescribed by the rule or those particular prayers to which a soul feels herself drawn. Grace should not be anticipated, but followed. Grace will suggest to the soul when it is opportune to substitute the unceasing act of love for this or that free prayer.

THE ACT OF LOVE AND MEDITATION

Sister Consolata was always faithful in observing community meditation and mental prayer. But she never succeeded in meditating according to any fixed method; this is, after all, also the case with other souls who incline by preference to the prayer of simplicity. "Young bees," writes Saint Francis de Sales, "are called grubs until they are able to make honey. Similarly, prayer is called meditation until it has produced the honey of devotion; then it becomes contemplation. The longing for divine love makes us meditate, but once won, love causes us to contemplate."[1]

Sister Consolata had attained precisely this effectiveness

[1] *Of the Love of God*, Book 6, chapter 3

and unceasing union with God, so it is understandable that everything which books could say left her for the most part unaffected, and sometimes was more of a hindrance than a help. She writes:

"The vine branch does not produce grapes by itself, but only when it is attached to the trunk of the vine. Now this union with the trunk (Jesus) is favored by the unceasing act of love. Now Jesus no longer requires lengthy meditations and reading from me; for my soul they would be a waste of time. The important thing for me is to yield much fruit; that is to love much, to love unceasingly."

Jesus taught her in the same sense when she inquired of Him one day why she was unable to meditate or derive spiritual nourishment and fervor from the beautiful books which were being read aloud. He explained that the same food was not suitable for every constitution, that a delicate stomach was unable to digest a luxury food which is beneficial to a robust one, and that to her He had assigned the Gospel as certainly the spiritual food of which a beginner stands in need, different from that of a proficient soul or one who has already arrived at the unitive life.

After a certain meditation on the end of man, Sister Consolata was racking her brain on how to direct her life intentions, when Jesus told her (September 1935):

You are too little to form intentions. I will locate the purpose of your life. Just love Me continually, and do not interrupt your act of love!

And another time, and again in order to calm her concerning her inability to meditate, Jesus told her:

It is no longer the hour to meditate or to read, but now is the time to love Me, to behold Me and see Me in everyone, to suffer with joy and with thanksgiving! (April 3rd, 1940)

No matter what the theme of the meditation, the divine

Voice and Light always recalled her spirit to the exercise of the unceasing act of love. One day she had been unable to hear the point of the meditation and sought to substitute the Gospel. On opening the book, she read: "Prepare the way of the Lord. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked ways shall be made straight and the rough ways plain."[8] The meditation period was almost ended when Jesus gave her to understand:

The act of love does all this in a soul: it fills every void and lays low all pride. (October 18th, 1935)

Again, on June 25th, 1936, when the meditation was on the Gospel passage: "Watch and pray," Jesus told her: *Do not worry. I am watching in you. I am praying in you. It is for you to love Me, and only that!*

As one can see, everything was to bring her, and everything did in fact bring her, to the unceasing act of love. After a meditation on the prodigal son, she noted in her diary:

Yes, Jesus gave me the most beautiful gown: love. He placed in my finger the ring of fidelity, and on my feet the sandals of confidence. And in return the Good God asks only: the unceasing act of love."

And after a meditation on Our Lord's words to Saint Peter: "Could you not watch one hour?"[9] she wrote:

I must remember this divine saying throughout the day, so as to give to Jesus entire hours of love.

And again on August 20th, 1936:

During meditation I understood that my act of love is like the treasure hidden in the field, and like the pearl described in the Gospel parable. In order to possess this treasure I must sell

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[8] Luke 3:4-5

[9] Matthew 26:40

[9] Mark 14:37

all. What remained to me still to sell? A few sentences which escaped me during recreation. I determined to be more faithful. I willed it and I kept my promise. After the victory I found myself much stronger in the exercise of virtue.

It was not, therefore, a case of her neglecting or failing to attribute sufficient importance to meditation. On the contrary. But for her, meditation did not mean an exercise of the mind but a tranquil repose of her heart in love, to love, to love unceasingly, to remove every obstacle that impeded the perfect continuity and purity of love.

All this, we believe, will be of comfort and assistance to souls, particularly to those who have already progressed in the unitive life and who are experiencing the same difficulty with a multiplicity of vocal prayers and with methodical meditation and also to all souls without exception on the days when the spirit is unable to concentrate on a point of reflection for reasons of acidity and so on. What is to be done then? Rack one's brain in order to extract even one good thought. It would be a loss of time. Let the mind wander? No. Instead, the soul can always love, and every act of love, even when done with an effort of the will, has always great value for merit and sanctification. Saint Thomas also teaches that the continuity of our love makes up for our weakness in contemplation.[9]

THE ACT OF LOVE AND SPIRITUAL READING

As with meditation, so also is spiritual reading in general of the greatest usefulness to most souls.

Sister Consolata never omitted the reading required by her rule, but beyond that she read little or nothing. In general, she

9. *Summa Theologiae*, II, II, 180, ad 1.

felt no need to seek enlightenment from books. Referring to her first mass as a Capuchin nun, she writes:

"I have never read ascetical books and I read no books now. Besides the rule, the constitution and directives, I keep only the *Imitation of Christ* and the Holy Gospel ready at hand for spiritual reading. I use *The Story of a Soul* and this suffices for my whole life."

Actually, it did not serve her for her entire life, for Jesus later made her put that away also.

Aside from the fact that Jesus instructed her interior, there applies here what we have already said in connection with meditation: the purpose of such books certainly is to bring the soul to love God and her neighbor in a spirit of sacrifice. Now the spiritual life of Sister Consolata was already practically one uninterrupted act of love "yes" to everything. What could books teach her that would be any better? She writes:

"A book, or a page, no matter how beautiful, makes me interrupt the act of love. Jesus desires my love to be entire and uninterrupted."

Nor did it not change her opinion even when the divine Visitations came silent in her soul. One of her Sisters once loaned her a book entitled *With Jesus Alone*. Sister Consolata kept it for several months, then returned it secretly so as not to have to confess to not having read it.

"One day, in a period of darkness, I sought enlightenment in the book *With Jesus Alone*. I was totally overwhelmed with doubts and understood nothing anymore. A good thing that my spiritual director put my little bark on even keel again. I have learned my lesson at last: give up the one book which has remained to me. The Holy Gospel will be Consolata's food henceforth for the rest of her life."

During 1936 she noted in her diary:

"Before beginning the holy exercises I had noticed in the

library at Rome at St. Gerard Majella. The desire to know this saint who turned every stab into an act of love made me put that book aside until I could obtain permission to use it for my spiritual reading during these holy days. But even before I could ask Mother Abbess, Jesus made Himself heard in my soul: why not rather read His book, the Holy Gospel? In the lives of the saints one needs to read entire chapters in order to find words of eternal life, but in His Divine Book every word would be food for eternal life for me. I accepted this divine inspiration and did my spiritual reading in the Holy Gospel. Every passage brought me enough comfort and nourishment.

Sister Emmanuela never gave up that book of the Holy Gospel. During the dark hours of the spirit she had recourse to it and always found the light she needed. She writes:

Jesus makes me understand the Holy Gospel very well. I never open it at random; my glance often happens to fall on the words of Saint Luke 1:45: "Blessed are you who believed!" Emmanuela also desires to be never ashamed of the Good God."

Yes, I believe in the Good God by offering Him an unceasing act of virginal love: that is the sense in which Jesus made her understand the Gospel.

I have found so much light in the Gospel. He that abides in Me and I in him, the same bears much fruit. My great desire is to be fruitful, satisfied by it. Not only that, but by remaining in Jesus through the unceasing act of love in prayer, you will be heard, for it says in the Gospel: "If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, you shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you." My God! You have exceeded all

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[1] Luke 1:45

[2] John 15:5

[3] John 15:7

my expectations. I need only to observe Your commandments with fidelity in order to be certain of persevering in Your love. And I contain this: Jesus, Mary, I love You! Save souls!

In my mind, I keep hearing the words of the Blessed Virgin at the wedding feast in Cana: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do it." And because my spiritual director has told me never to deny Jesus one single act of love, I seek to do just that. This now simplifies my entire life, although attaining it out of it has become marvelously simple. Nothing else. No one else. In that was vitiated even as what frenzy.

One passage in the Holy Gospel has given me particular obedience: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." Jesus, I said, use this Your power in my soul and establish me in the unceasing act of love so that I may not lose one. You can do it.

"He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathers not with Me scatters." When I am not with Jesus in a continuing act of love, I am against Him. I am scattering.

"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." If I do not carry the cross of the unceasing act of love, I am not following Jesus, and therefore I cannot follow Him to Calvary."

It is superfluous to point out that all these interpretations of the Gospel texts have no exegetical value. Sister Consolata simply adapted them to her own spiritual needs.

We have made particular mention of the Gospel, but Sister Consolata loved and delighted in all Holy Writings.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

* Matthew 16:24

I am ignorant in the extreme, and yet I often receive so much enlightenment during the recital of the Divine Office concerning the Latin words I pronounce, that I understand and enjoy them more than if they were written in Italian. . . . Jesus is silent now, the Father in heaven nevertheless does not fail to provide directly the food for His little bird. He nourishes me with these grains by letting me find them in Holy Scripture; in fact He Himself hands them out to me. Also at Matins last night my thought was arrested during the first lesson by "Quis ergo nos separabit a charitate Christi . . . Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ . . . Neither union with the Apostle I joyfully repeat that no creature can now separate me from my burning act of love."

What is here said concerning spiritual reading properly speaking applies equally to the reading in the refectory. The day Sister Consolata found was struck by this passage. Find for yourself some task that will completely absorb you. On entering these words in her notebook she added this comment:

What must completely absorb me is a continuous Jesus Mary I love You. Save souls."

On May 9th, 1936, she writes:

Yesterday's mealtime reading told of Our Lord's desire for wholehearted and perfect victim souls, and this morning the divine light explained to me that if I were to cut even a small part from a magnificent pearl, it would no longer be presentable at the royal table. Just so, if my soul cut to some extent love through an extraneous thought or word, the victim would no longer be complete and perfect, and therefore no longer presentable at the table of the Divine King.

THE ACT OF LOVE AND THE PARTICULAR EXAMEN

Concerning the particular examen of one's conscience that indispensable means for maintaining and increasing spiritual fervor, Sister Consolata wrote as follows:

It is necessary for me to convince myself once and for all that to make a particular examen on any point other than the unceasing act of virginal love is for my soul only a waste of time and energy; it would mean leaving the road which God wants me to follow. Therefore, my particular examen shall solely and always be concerned with the unceasing act of love, the purity of mind. [illegible] have come to understand that it is better for me to concentrate all my energies on that, and not so much on [illegible] them in numerous resolutions.

Clearly, she had simplified her spirituality also in this respect. [illegible] does not mean that she did not appreciate such items as the value of the particular examen; on the contrary, [illegible] a place of first importance in her spirituality. She did not limit it to the few minutes required by her daily schedule, but in a sense she prolonged it throughout the entire day. Jesus had taught her to renew her resolution of the unceasing virginal act of love at every hour throughout the day, and to this she would add a rapid examen of the hour just passed.

To that end she would enter in a little notebook which she always carried with her for that purpose, any infidelities in the intensity of purity of her love. In that way she had before her in the evening, when she made a comprehensive examen of the entire day, the clear and precise state of her soul. She would then ask pardon and would make reparation for her infidelities by making crosses on the floor with her tongue or by kissing the crucifix. After that she would take up again calmly and cheerfully her way of love.

We do not say that such a method would be suitable for every soul, not even a majority of souls. But for Sister Consolata, who longed to respond fully to grace, it was a necessity. To offer an unceasing act of virginal love in fact requires of the soul an extreme vigilance over herself, and the act is really impossible without controlling and renewing one's fervor as often as possible.

On the other hand, to conduct the particular examen and concentrate always on one point made its practice easier, and the divine promises concerning the unceasing act of love, which we have already mentioned, gave her the certainty that through it she would attain all the rest, that is, the perfection of every virtue.

THE ACT OF LOVE AND THE SPIRITUAL RETREAT

The days of the monthly retreat were always for Sister Consolata, so to speak, days of spiritual provisioning. She made her retreats, therefore, with scrupulous fidelity and diligence, and since each Capuchin nun was free to choose for herself the most suitable day, she selected the first Friday of each month.

She began her preparation on the preceding evening during the Holy Hour, an hour from eleven to midnight. She writes:

"During the monthly day of recollection Jesus would nourish and instruct my soul with some thought and engrave it upon my heart."

She also mentions some of these thoughts, as for instance: "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister.[18] For He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant."[19]

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[18] Matthew 20:28

[19] Philippians 2:7

What great enlightenment and resolutions — she wrote.

But here again enlightenment and resolutions were always related to her particular vocation of love, that is, the unceasing act of love. At the close of the monthly retreat day or on the Sunday after, she would send a detailed report on the state of her soul to her spiritual director, as he had enjoined upon her and Jesus had approved. We quote a part from one such report, which was written after the first Friday in September [illegible], four years before her death, when her health was already failing:

"Here I am placing my poor soul at your feet, to receive in spirit your absolution and fatherly blessing, to gain new strength to carry on (usque ad finem — all the way to the end.)

"Your last letter has been my daily bread throughout the whole past month. I thank you for it from my heart. During August it seems to me love was more intense, although I must confess to the loss of two hours.[1] The unceasing effort to live the present moment, he is mine, enters my attention on the unceasing act of love, it preserves my spirit in peace and frees it from all anxiety over the morrow and what work to hope with. On two occasions I indulged in useless thoughts, five times in useless talk, twice I did not suffer gladly. My charity, it seems to me, is in order. If a reproof escapes me or I resent some words, etc., I immediately ask forgiveness without a thought for myself, so that peace might always reign in every heart around me.

"In the kitchen my struggle for self-denial continues, but now everything passes between Jesus and Consolata, to tell You that I love You."

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[1] Sister [illegible] was a lay sister, unceasing but wanted [illegible] hours. To have lost two [illegible] a month is not much. Sister believes it must be assumed that these [illegible] were not voluntary, but caused mostly by exterior circumstances [illegible]

During these days I have great need to pray in order to maintain myself on the heights. I feel tired. Obtain for me a little generosity so that I may defeat my selfish nature and launch myself generously on the road of daily sacrifice.[7]

THE ACT OF LOVE IN VARIOUS SPIRITUAL STATES

It is clear from what has already been said that the unceasing act of love was in truth the whole life of Sister Consolata, as indeed her whole life was one unceasing act of love. This was the case because she relied on the divine teaching and had faith in the act of love and its value. This value was above all intrinsic.

I cannot communicate continuously as I my need, but I have come to understand that an act of love brings Jesus into the soul, that it increases grace and is like a Communion.

She also knew its worth in regard to her own vocation and mission.

The will of God, my vocation to attain to sanctity, is one continuous: Jesus, Mary, I love You! Save souls! Every effort, every force and activity of the soul must be aimed at not interrupting the act of love. Nothing else, this alone! For that is my way, the way which Jesus has pointed out to me.

The act of love also has value because it eliminates from the spiritual life of so many Marthas their being "turbans erga plurima," troubled about many things.

Spiritually, Jesus demanded of her an absolute silence of thoughts and words, and of the heart an unceasing: Jesus, Mary, I love You, Save souls! The more faithful I am to this little way of love, the more is my soul flooded with joy and a true peace.

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[7] Letter 4

that anything is able to disturb, not even my [illegible] when I bring them to Jesus. He makes me remember them through actual fruitions, and these in turn increase the peace and joy in my heart."

Finally, there remains the act of love for eternal life.

[illegible] and grant, O Lord, the efficacy make me that my every act of love endures to all eternity.

So there results one single, constant, and trusting prayer.

Jesus, grant that I may live entirely increased in You [illegible] and fulfillment, so that You may always do what You know with me. You alone must remain, and an unceasing Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. Grant that of the seventeen hours in this day I may not lose one.

We sought also adjudicate that the act of love was not one and [illegible] weapon against the enemy. But one cannot assume that the devil would leave [illegible] in peace and let her act of love go unopposed. There was a battle without respite, [illegible] and then in the open, but she [illegible] means of the act of love.

Faith is the weapon which always assures one the victory is the unceasing act of love. [illegible] prepares the soul for the temptation, and it sustains it during the temptation, for love is everything. Therefore, I must not let myself be [illegible] discouraged by the enemy; the act of love must dominate the struggle, never the struggle dominate the act of love.

We must not think by Sister [illegible] a spiritual [illegible] in the way in which she was [illegible] Nor did so also when [illegible] herself in spiritual darkness, walking in the simple path of faith.

It was one o'clock in the evening when I came out of the sacristy and found myself in complete darkness in the [illegible] I was not hazardous to descend, but I long to be eating, and by following it carefully reached the bottom

step. As I was descending I thought of how similar was the case of many souls to complete darkness. But by clinging to the unceasing act of love I will safely arrive at my last hour. Yes, the act of love is really everything. It gives light and strength to present. Where would my soul if she did not have this anchor of salvation to which to cling at certain times? I cannot fathom the abyss of despair into which I would fall.

Again the days of gladdening and in the days of suffering. We did the experience to force to her the heights of love were never separated from those of suffering, and yet she could bear witness.

The unceasing act of love keeps the soul always in peace. I believe that it has a strong ascendency over suffering and helps one to suffer joyfully. The act of love is stronger than any pain. I see that the unceasing act of love maintains and sustains. I maintain my little bark steady through all confusion, boredom and troublesome. Sister Constantia knew that therefore achieve the virtue of love without a great effort or in a short space of time. Internally her merit that she persevered despite of everything, began each day anew and [illegible] herself after every fall. And this through years and years, with her [illegible] instancy and humble prayer. She left no means untried and let no occasion pass for renewing her resolution. The sluggard wishes and wills not. Sister Constantia was certainly not a sluggish soul, nor did she deceive herself with mere wishing. She was seriously and strongly. Her energetic and tenacious as we have seen, was one of the most [illegible] characteristics of her spirit. The same impetuous character that had earned for her the nickname of "Thunder and Lightning," also directed and sustained her [illegible] the good cause. All who knew her [illegible] admired her strong and firm character. That was

due above all to her unceasing act of love. Her "I will" is to be found in her every resolution and is always entirely sincere. This fact is evident on every page of her writings.

"I wish to respond fully to divine grace and let this act fill my entire day from the first to the last Sign of the Cross. I wish my every act, however insignificant, to be performed with oh so much love. . . . No thunderstorm or stroke of lightning shall interrupt one continuous Jesus, Mary, I love You, Save souls. To see and treat You in everything. . . . O Jesus, with Your aid I will not deprive You of one act of love, not one! Yes, Jesus, that I will do. And in order that I may keep faith with this, I will . . . I submerge it and leave it forever in Your Most Precious Blood!"

THE HEIGHT OF HEROISM IN THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE

It was always the same effort and good will. Her iron will surmounted every trial, every renunciation, every sacrifice with firmness. She abhorred mediocrity, despised compromises, she had a heroic desire to reach the peak, and her heroism was continuous, as one may judge from the following words which she addressed to her spiritual director on August 28th, 1938. These might be termed her spiritual testament to all souls who wish to follow her.

"Father, at present I feel an ardent desire within me to live the Little Way, even at the price of heroism. . . . I see that I can do it, I really have the will. And so, I will it with all my strength, and I begin. Father, I sense an impetuous duty to live

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[1] That is, the way of the unceasing act of love. The origin and significance of this terminology will be explained in the chapter which follows.

my Littlest Way to the full. I wish I could run out to all the Littlest Souls throughout the world, when I am on the point of death. Follow me! I will, indeed I will, to offer the unceasing act of love from my awakening until I fall asleep, because Jesus has asked for it, and He has asked for it because I am able to give it to Him if I trust in Him alone.

But my weakness is extreme, and temptations are not lacking. I need to rise up alone against them all, and must continue by sheer will power. No! I do not wish to lead a cowardly existence. I wish to live heroically — I desire it with all the strength of my heart and of my will, and I wish to continue to until death. Jesus, who died on the Cross for love of me, merits it, and for love of Him I wish to live heroically!

But to live upon such heights does not please human nature and comes hard. I am in need of your prayers, Father, in order to persevere. On that peak alone do I find peace; there alone do I find joy and strength in suffering. If I live on these heights, where there is only Christ Crucified, then I have need of continual sacrifice, as I do of the air I breathe.

I see all this, I sense it, I understand it. That is why I do not feel right if I have not overcome every cowardice, even alone and in the face of all, and if I do not live my Littlest Way which I love so much! — O Father, pray that I may make my divine dream come true, else I shall be extremely unhappy.

These words reveal Sister Consolata completely, her soul and her life!

7

A TANGIBLE FRUIT OF THE DIVINE MESSAGE: THE WORK OF THE LITTLEST ONES

JESUS REVEALS THE WORK OF THE LITTLEST ONES

The work of the Littlest Ones represents the tangible fruit of this new manifestation of the Sacred Heart of Jesus which has to grow and perpetuate itself throughout the world. The unceasing act of love, it is true, had to be the practical expression of Sister Consolata's life of love, but that still did not mean that she was supposed to pass it on to other souls. As we have, in the preceding pages, already used the terms "the Littlest Way of Love" and "the Littlest Ones," this was due only to the exigencies of the compilation. In reality, Sister Consolata spoke solely of "the Little Way" and "the Little Souls" until the time when Jesus revealed to her the work of the Littlest Ones.

In paging through her writings, one perceives that she had an idea, at least in the beginning, that she was to show to the world a new spiritual way or to give life to a new work. The unceasing act of love seemed to be the means for realizing her own mission on behalf of her Brothers. Only with the passing of time was her soul gradually illumined, and then she perceived intuitively that other souls might follow her and would indeed follow her.

The first divine hint at this trust of her vocation of love came on August [illegible]th, 1934, when Jesus told her:

When you will have uttered your last, Jesus, Mary, I love You, Sweet souls, I will gather it up and will convey it by means of your life sufferings to millions of souls who, though they be sinners, will welcome it and will follow you in the simple way of trust and love, and in that way will love Me.

On November 2[illegible]th, 1935, He added:

Have no fear. On your dying day you will have attained the summit and will have pronounced the last act of love which Jesus desired when He called you to become a victim of love.

On December [illegible]4th, 1935, Our Lord explained to Sister Consolata the reason for changing her spiritual director and intimated that her apostolate was to find its fulfilment in some special work:

Do you know why I have desired this change in your spiritual direction? It is because Father X will make all My desires his own and unfolding the work to completion in the manner in which I wish it.

When Sister Consolata repeated these words to her new spiritual director, she admitted to him that she did not understand to what work Jesus was alluding.[illegible]

God's works all follow an identical pattern: a hidden preparation, small and humble beginnings, then a sure growth which can overcome the mental obstacles. It was the same with the work of the Holiest Ones. Not only did it originate in the mind of a convent and in the concentrated of a soul, but it remained veiled even to that soul when the seed was already present. No, Sister Consolata did not discern the stupendous fruit which Jesus wished to gather from her vocation of love, that is, from her unveiling act of love. She did not know of the work which was to enroll souls by the million all over the world until Jesus deigned to speak of it. Nor did He even then bring

her out of her concealment but rather plunged her into still more complete self-effacement.

Before going into the beginnings of this work, it is necessary, however, to clarify the importance of this term. We call it a work because Jesus called it that and because it is one in fact, but not in the sense that it is some kind of association with registration requirements, certificates, etc. [illegible] As we have explained before, it is essentially a spiritual way which is therefore open to all souls who feel called to participate in it. There is no need for formalities or institution of persons.

However, it is none the less an institution on this account: for the souls who follow this road are not floundering in uncertainties, each on her own, but they find themselves mutually united by the bond of an identical vocation to love and an identical response to that vocation: the unceasing act of love. Without knowing one another or anything about one another, and perhaps without ever meeting here on earth, they find they nevertheless constitute in truth a moral entity in the Church: they form a select army which is compact and very active in the spiritual renewal of the world.

Here is how the work originated. On July 4th, [illegible] the first Saturday of the month, Jesus gave Sister Consolata to understand during her meditation:

Among the youngest members of Catholic Action there are the Little Ones. And among the Little Souls there are the Littlest Ones. It is belonging to these, and to them will belong all those souls who will follow me in offering Me the unceasing act of love.

Jesus is the Divine Word: "All things were made by him." He is the substantial Word which creates what It decrees: "He spoke and they were made." With the above words He estab-

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[illegible]

[illegible] Psalm 32:9

[illegible] the Most Way of Love and created in the bosom of the Church the Most Sweet Souls and gave life to the work which must unite them.

A few days later, on July 22nd, the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, Jesus returned to the subject of the Virtuous Ones in these words:

I am not asking you to write down these things for yourself who are about to descend into your grave, but for your Brothers and for the enormous number of Divine Souls who will follow you in offering Me the unceasing act of love. O Consolata, do you remember your great passion to bring children to Jesus and Jesus to children? Well, you will be bringing children to Me even when you are in heaven, the Virtuous Ones, and you will be giving Me to them through your unceasing act of love. Do you believe this?[1]

She did believe it, but:

Jesus, but I am doing nothing.

That does not matter. It is I who am doing everything.

Before the end of that year, as my spiritual Sister Consolata was still under the impression of the great favors she felt Jesus added:

Did I not tell you that you would be loaded down with My graces until you could bear no more? You see, I am keeping My Word. But you must believe in Me.

In June 27th, 1946, Sister Consolata informed her spiritual director of the matter in the following words:

In my diary you will some day read about many divine favors, [illegible] on the feast of Saint Mary Magdalene, I received great enlightenment and came to understand that Jesus had not forgotten the great passion of my child

[1] [illegible] great passion of Pierina Bertone when she was active in the ranks of Catholic Action.

hood and girlhood to bring children to Jesus. Jesus made me write things down for a huge number of Littlest Souls who will follow me by giving Him the unceasing act of love. So, even from heaven I will be leading the Littlest Ones to Him. My mission will be for the Brothers, and my vocation will be to bring the Littlest Ones to Jesus. See what Jesus can do. While He annihilates Consolata in self-effacement, He brings to bloom all the flowers of past renunciations. And while the grain rots underground, Jesus prepares a brilliant, beautiful, and marvelous apostolate. Oh, I believe in Jesus, and with His grace I do sure to be never in Him to my last breath, even though I die in the consciousness of having done nothing, absolutely nothing, for the great King, but to love Him, believe in Him, and trust in Him!"

THE CONSECRATION OF THE FIRST LITTLEST ONE

Although the first Saturday of July 1938 was the day on which Jesus revealed and instituted the Littlest Way of Love and the work which was to give it concrete form, the work itself was not officially begun until two months later, on the first Friday of September, when the first Littlest One, Giovanna Compagno, was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Among that there might be no doubt as to the meaning of "Littlest One," which refers to the soul and not to the age, in the early days even Sister Consolata was mistaken in this. The Good God disposed that the first Littlest One was to be of the not exactly tender age of 85 years, and not a Religious, though she had preserved her virginity. This was to demonstrate precisely that the Littlest Way of Love is not the privilege of a certain class of persons, but a gift which the Sacred Heart of

Jesus bestows on all souls. Here is how the Heart of Jesus communicated the gift of her election to this soul.

Giovanna Compare had been born and raised in Turin and for many years directed a well-run shoe store. In 1931, at the age of [illegible], she gave up the business and retired to a small boarding house conducted by Dominican nuns not far from the Capuchin monastery. She was happy there, for she had Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament under the same roof. Her whole life was dedicated to prayer and charity.

At the beginning of October 1934 Father X preached the Forty Hour devotions in the Capuchin church, and Giovanna attended. At the close of the Triduum she addressed to that priest a letter filled with exalted sentiments and ended it thus: "Pray for me who hunger so much for God." In reply the priest paid her a visit. God was unfolding these two souls for His mercy of Jesus, and that holy relationship was never broken. It grew into a spiritual union of father and daughter. Their talks were not frequent, but from each one the priest returned astonished and humiliated. How true it is that God reveals Himself to the little ones. They spoke only of God, for Giovanna's spirit lived in Him and she sought Him in her daily communion, she sought Him also in frequent visits to the Blessed Sacrament in the little boarding house chapel, and she sought Him through unceasing prayer.

Again, she felt that she asked something which would further intensify her love and prayer and release her love from a residue of diffidence.

Then suddenly, seized by grace, Giovanna Compare found her way, and the Heart of Jesus had made its first conquest for the ranks of the Lowliest Ones.

A few days later, on August 31st, [illegible] she wrote to the priest:

I must tell you, Father, that I have found my place in the throng of Littlest Souls who, like little gnats, buzz about the Cross of Jesus, trying to nourish on Him so as to suck vitality from Him. The term "Littlest One" has for me an extraordinary enchantment. Merely to pronounce it brings advance into my soul, points out a new way for me, and forms my unconquerable defense against the vain and foolish temptations of self-love. [illegible] (Could this be a figment of my imagination?) I cannot believe that I, [illegible], would never have thought of possibly finding in this world the tranquillity, security, and freedom which my soul finds there. [illegible] am thinking of coming to visit you, but, even before next Sunday, for I have need to confer with you.

Before next Sunday [illegible] Jesus, the [illegible] Heart, who wished to institute the new work on the First Friday of the month, was acting within her. The interview was a short one.

"Tell me, Father, what I must do in order to enter the ranks of the Littlest Ones [illegible] to enter either [illegible] I do not know, but it seems to me that Jesus leaves something from me [illegible] I do not know how to express it well."

The priest was greatly astonished, for he had never given any thought to the possibility that the work might be started even before Sister Consolata's death. He replied:

"Well, suppose we do this: tomorrow, being the First Friday of the month, I will come to your boarding house and will celebrate Mass there after the communion. Mass. You will make your communion, and, [illegible] after Mass, you will [illegible] consecrate yourself as a victim of love to the Sacred Heart of Jesus through Mary, Most Holy, and you will promise from then on to employ all your spiritual energy in the unceasing act of love and in the two other points of the Littlest Way: love from the altar, and upon the altar. I will offer your consecration to the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

And so it was done. After the Mass they recited the Magnificat together in thanksgiving. The work of the Littlest Ones which Jesus had promised to Sister Consolata had been officially inaugurated.

SISTER CONSOLATA AND THE WORK OF THE LITTLEST ONES

And Sister Consolata? On that Thursday evening, after the above-mentioned talk between the priest and Giovanna Compagno, the former hastened to acquaint her with the matter in a brief note and recommend it to her prayers. Sister Consolata entered in her diary:

"Gifts are offered on the vigil of a feast. Jesus knows that, and so He gave me the first Littlest One on the vigil of the first Friday of September. What a fine and delicate sentiment! Father has harvested this first Littlest One and tomorrow he will offer her to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus at Holy Communion. O Jesus, how good You are! Truly, You think of everything, and to me You leave but the thought to love You. Thanks be to You, O Jesus!"

It is easy to imagine in what prayerful fervor she passed the day, Jesus for His part, did not fail to give her further instructions concerning her work, all the more so since she had struggled at the first mention of Littlest Ones, that it was a question of real children. She could not help smiling when she heard from the priest that the first Littlest One was over eighty years old. Jesus told her:

The Littlest Ones will not merely be counted by the thousands but by millions and millions. They will not belong exclusively to the [illegible], there will also be men, yes, there are many little Souls even among men!

And after your death the Littlest Souls will come running to

you rest as the children of your catechism class, the Benjamins came running to you one day in the great Piazza San Massimo.[1]

On the evening of that First Friday Sister Consolata entered in her diary:

"This entire day has been dedicated to the Littlest Ones. This evening, at the feet of Jesus so amply exposed in the Blessed Sacrament, I embraced in spirit all the Littlest Ones throughout the centuries and I consecrated them all in unity in the Sacred Heart of Jesus and asked Him to shelter them all in the deep love of His Heart, to watch over them there that not one might be lost, and then to consume them in the divine flame, and to grant to each of them to die for love of Him.

Jesus accepted her prayer and granted it.

Yes, Consolata, the hearts of the Littlest Ones are destined to die of love for Me and to consume themselves exclusively for Me. The world cannot, can Me cruel, for ever so many, die of love, so many of the world. Is it not right, Consolata, that the creature should consume herself for her Creator?

THE LITTLEST ONES AND OUR LADY

We now come to point out another instance of how admirably the Heart of Jesus prepares and directs events even in the smallest or apparently for us unimportant. Note that the work of the Littlest Ones was officially instituted on the first Fridays of September, during the Novena of Our Lady's Nativity. The significance of this providential coincidence is obvious. A work which Jesus Himself termed marvelous and of so great

[1] Piazza Petrone, between the parish of San Massimo, which formed a part of the Salesian institute, mainly frequented by such Consolata.

and universal importance for the salvation and sanctification of souls. It could not be begun without some sign and pledge of protection on the part of her whose name, together with that of Jesus, is unceasingly invoked by the earliest Souls. The love for Jesus and the love for Mary are united in the same perennial praise and in the same prayer on behalf of souls.

Now it was a part of God's design that this new work should be born at a time when the Church was preparing to celebrate the day on which the most exalted of all creatures appeared at least upon earth. A humble creature in her humanity, but even more so in her spirit. The Blessed Virgin alone could in reality make herself the least, she who was so great in the eyes of God. Blessed is she who has contracted the disease of our nothingness, however deeply we may humble ourselves, we will never reach that meanest degree, that lowliness, that nothingness in which we find ourselves before God. Thus Mary Most Holy was a true and perfect Jesus Christ in the particular sense of which we have treated, because at the moment of her life, from its first to its last instant, an unceasing act of love toward God was an act of love toward her neighbor and an instant yes to the will of God.

That is why the Heart of Jesus wished the work to be inaugurated on the first Friday of September. It was to be like a flower that opened its bloom at the feet of this heavenly Babe to receive the dew of her first smile, the warmth of her first blessing, as a pledge of success and of perennial duration.

Notice the association in her tender love for the Virgin and not [illegible] these circumstances and feel their importance and [illegible] to associate the earliest Ones not only to the Heart of Jesus but also to that of Our Blessed Lady. She writes:

Because the most of these souls may [illegible] herself among the earliest. Now I say, on the first Friday of September, [illegible] the Nativity of Mary Most Holy, [illegible]

shall embrace all the Littlest Ones of all the ages on Tuesday next September 8th, and I will place them next to her cradle and consecrate them to the infant Mary. She will protect them, will favor them, will keep them under her mantle always, just as she does with Sister Consolata. And the Littlest Ones will love Our Lady deeply because the unceasing act of love which they offer to Jesus is also intended for Mary Most Holy."

THE LITTLEST ONES AND SISTER CONSOLATA

With the consecration of the Littlest Ones to the Heart of Jesus and Mary Most Holy, Sister Consolata's particular task came to an end as far as that work and her interest in its fulfillment were concerned, for she was not to lessen the continuity and originality of her love, nor the self-effacement which Jesus desired. For that reason He told her on July 5th, 1936, after revealing the work to her:

Love Me, give Me this unceasing act of love, and I promise you that you will give Me all your Brothers one by one, and then also the Littlest Ones.

Then, when the work had made an actual beginning, Our Lord intervened again so that Sister Consolata would not have to neglect her act of love:

Forget yourself, Consolata. Do not think about yourself or about what you might term your special vocation. No. The Heart of Jesus has made use of you as of a tool, as you would use a broom, but this marvelous work of the Littlest Ones will be brought to completion solely by the Heart of Jesus. Therefore, you must think only of giving Me the unceasing act of love, your yes, to everything and everybody, and of accepting suffering with gratitude. Nothing else! and think of everything, you must forget yourself!

On September 8th, 1936, He said:

Now that you have consecrated the Littlest Ones to the Immaculate Mother, you must think no more about the Littlest Ones except in your daily prayer. Think solely of the Brothers and Sisters whom you shall lead back to Me through the unceasing act of love.

But even this was not permitted to Sister Consolata to remain exclusively with this work, she nevertheless belongs to it, and it is upon her that the "Littlest Ones in their eyes" as was predicted on September 1st:

Do not interrupt your act of love. Proceed along your road unconcerned about the enemy's designs. Have no fear. Keep advancing always. Love conquers everything.

I desire a chain of love to ascend from earth to heaven. You must spread the Littlest Way as the first one to show you will have to serve as a model. Just as the world now looks upon the Little Flower as all millions of Littlest Ones all over the world look upon you.

We shall now watch how God strengthens Sister Consolata, the one made by Jesus and the other by Jesus' daily Crucifixion, which was at a time when Sister Consolata, at her wits' end, humiliated and embarrassed by so many divine favours, she turned to Jesus:

"But You are loving them passionately, these Littlest Ones."

"Yes," Our Lord replied, *they are the pupils of My eyes!*

On September 8th, 1942, Sister Consolata reconsecrated the Littlest Ones to the Immaculate Virgin, and she later gave her to understand that she was pleased with the gift:

"[illegible] and upon each one I will work with prudence [illegible] as I have done with you."

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST [illegible] FIRST ONE

If any doubt could still exist as to the divine origin and the excellence of the "Little Way of Love," the remaining months of Giovanna Compatore's life and her death would suffice to dissipate it. Her spiritual growth was admirable and her flight to sanctity rapid and sure. She no longer dreaded the heights now that her soul had become one of the "[illegible]" souls and had grown the wings of love and confidence. Uncertainty, fear, and concern about herself [illegible] disappeared as by magic. The divine Artist knew that time was short, and so He brought His masterpiece to completion with a few strokes. On October 27th [illegible], one short month after her consecration as a victim, Giovanna wrote to her spiritual director:

"[illegible] to tell you something about how I pass my days and a certain night hours since [illegible] received the great grace I spoke of the [illegible] another [illegible]. The thought of the fourth of September with its Magnificat brings more tears to my eyes now, but they are no more the tears of before. My trust in God [illegible] rests solely upon the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. And He lets me experience the consolations of saints through the efficacy of their prayers. [illegible] overwhelming transports and envelops me in a profusion of marvels which gives a profound peace to my life."

In the new way Giovanna found the holy liberty of a true child of God. [illegible] received [illegible] the wears but [illegible] herself. Now she sustained everything, or better said, she brought to more about herself. Everything in her spiritual life was now simplified and had a new perfection. She found that the increasing action of love sustained everything, gave everything, [illegible] everything. She experienced that the [illegible] was [illegible] and restful, and at the same time a divine means for ascending to further heights. On the feast of Mary's Nativity in

1877 that is, one year after her consecration as a Littlest One Giovanna renewed that same consecration with the following prayer which was also to be her nunc dimittis:

"O Mary Immaculate, my powerful advocate and most tender Mother, behold me prostrate at your feet in order to renew the act by which I am consecrated to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus as a Littlest One. My every thought and affection, my heart and all my love are for Jesus and for you, who thus dressed lay on which the Church sees and your appearance among us. I pray you, deign to take under your special protection the new work of the Littlest Ones of Jesus. That work realizes the marvelous and miraculous ones personal perennial praise of children, which your divine Son has shown Himself to delight in and to bless with the most sublime graces of His divine Heart. To your Immaculate heart I confide my consolations and my pains, my fears and my hopes, by offering the consecration of love which for me that I may conclude my life as Jesus has given Him an homage to the Most Holy Trinity and to you for ever and ever."

Giovanna felt that heaven was indeed near. Her strength was waning, but she did not fail to come downstairs each morning for Mass and Holy Communion, and to pay several visits during the day to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. There was still a youthful freshness in her parchment-like features which were almost free from wrinkles even at 85 years of age. She was consumed more by love than by years. When Jesus in the Holy Eucharist was exposed, the divine Host appeared radiant to her eyes, though they were sightless to everything else. In the depths of her heart, too, mysterious voices made themselves heard, like the whispers of the approaching Spouse.

She was ready, with the minutest care, she had arranged everything so as to give Sister Death a good reception. The Ca

pucher Sisters had the habit of their Order reads in which she wished to be clothed after death.

On January 20th, 1938, while alone in her room and absorbed in prayer, she felt herself overcome by an extraordinary effusion of grace; her whole being trembled, and an uncontrollable urge seized her to declare her love to God, to give Him thanks, to reach Him, to become transformed into Him. Falling upon her knees, her arms raised, her face bathed in tears, she exclaimed: "My God, my God, what is this?"

It was her call to heaven. On Sexagesima Sunday, February 20th, 1938, she came downstairs to Mass for the last time. On the Wednesday following she received Extreme Unction with clear consciousness. Then followed three days and three nights in which she was with Jesus on the Cross, suffering mysterious spasms without respite. But not one lament was heard. To her spiritual director she confides:

"When I meditated on the Passion, it seemed to me that Christ Jesus was suffering especially in the agonizing spasms; I believe that now He is permitting me to share in them."

Then, turning her eyes towards the crucifix on the opposite wall, she repeated with an incredible transport of love what had been her watchword in life:

"To love You, to follow You, to imitate You."

Someone remarked that soon she would be receiving her reward for so many good deeds.

"Deeds, no! I have done nothing. But that I have loved Jesus much, above everything else, that yes, that is what consoles me!"

Sisters of various religious congregations and priests came to her bedside to sit with her and pray for her.

"Jesus is faithful. I have always refused the friendships of the world, and He has surrounded me with holy friendships.

When Holy Viaticum was solemnly brought to her on Friday evening, she begged forgiveness for any scandal she had given. The sighs and tears of those about her were her reply. She was speaking of having given scandal — she whose virtue could be admired by all!

On Saturday afternoon her suffering seemed to reach its height.

Are you suffering much, Carmania?

Yes. I would never have thought it possible that a mere creature could suffer like this. But do not grieve over it, Father; for I have great need to suffer!

Later on, she seemed suddenly relieved; her body ceased no longer to pain. But she was not deceived.

It is the betterment which precedes the climax.

She actually spoke and acted as though she were cured. That evening the Holy Rosary was, therefore, prayed in her room, and at the fourth glorious mystery, the Assumption of Mary, she commented:

"In heaven, body and soul! How beautiful and consoling is the profession of faith on the point of death!"

She led the fifth mystery herself:

"Let us contemplate Mary, the Comforter of the Afflicted."

During the night her pain returned, and at about two o'clock she received Holy Communion for the last time. Her mind remained marvelously alert almost to the end. This came at the stroke of one in the afternoon of Septuagesima Sunday, February 7th, 1938. She had made a prayerful sign of the Cross, and after a short agony this first fruit of the sweetly returned her head upon the Heart of Jesus, there to remain forever and to continue her cantiche of love: "Jesus, Mary, I love You! Save souls!"

SISTER CONSOLATA'S MESSAGE TO THE LITTLEST ONES

Concerning the death of the first Littlest One, Sister Consolata wrote:

I do not know why, but ever since this dear soul was wrapped her way to heaven, I am completely persuaded by a wave of love, an intense love, and by light, oh what light Jesus has given me, with greater strength and grace, greater perseverance in the increasing act of love, and a real longing for a life of silence. As a result, I am confident that, as this work was one to suffer, we are to go into Jesus the soul He desires.

The work of the Littlest Ones did not decline with the death of the first member, nor did the impressionable act of love become extinguished outside the Capuchin convent. The Heart of Jesus has meanwhile issued its call to other souls, and the Littlest Ones already formed a group of some twenty Sisters and women members of a house. Action and even a small representation of men.

On her behalf and for those of the coming centuries Sister Consolata's spiritual director requested a letter from her in which she would expound her own thoughts on how to practice the increasing act of love and offer some practical advice. We reproduce this letter almost in its entirety, and every Littlest One may consider it to have been written expressly for her or for her. As intent as the more valuable work, it has found confirmation in Sister Consolata's own life, which will hardly ever be surpassed in simplicity and originality of love.

DEAREST LITTLEST ONE OF THE HEART OF JESUS

When you go to rest in the evening, you should ask your good guardian angel to love Jesus on your behalf while you are asleep, to awaken you in the morning, and to inspire you to the act of love. If you will be faithful in asking this of him each evening, he will be faithful in awakening you every morning with a Jesus, Mary, I love You. Sweet souls!

Begin your day in this way and continue to love until you meet Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. That does not mean that you should neglect other prayers. No. Carry on your usual practices of piety, but do not add any others. Let your act of love absorb your every spare moment, and in the future even some of your vocal prayers if Jesus so inspires you.

In Holy Communion entrust and abandon yourself to Jesus. Your troubles, projects, desires, and wants, and then think no more about them. For the whole day of a Dearest One, [illegible] the promise, and think of everything, even to the most detail, you must think only of loving Me. Keep these words of under an image of the Sacred Heart, and fix them in such a way that they will be always in sight. They will be a great help to you in freeing your spirit from all preoccupation, and you will experience in yourself how faithfully Jesus keeps His promises.

After having abandoned everything to Jesus during Holy Communion, renew to Him your promise of the unceasing act of love, your yes to everything He will demand of you throughout the day, and determine to see Him, to speak with Him, and to serve Him in all His creatures with whom you will come in contact.

Form your intention once and for all, that your act of love may ascend to heaven as a supplication to implore Heavenly for yourself in persevering uninterruptedly until your

next Communion and that it be in reparation for your every infidelity.

As you leave the church, begin with your act of love and continue it on your way, at home, and while carrying out each of your duties. Remember that Jesus has given His promise that while you are writing, or praying, or meditating, or while you must speak out of necessity or charity, your act of love will continue just the same.

Arrange to have before you, if possible, while you work, an image of a child with the words: Jesus, Mary, I love You. Save souls. This will serve as a reminder to you.

Among the obstacles which prevent you from offering Jesus the unceasing virginal act of love, Our Lord teaches us to combat three: useless thoughts, useless talk, and outside interests. As for thoughts and preoccupations, everything becomes useless from the moment that Jesus promises His Littlest Bride that He Himself will think of everything, even to the smallest details. As for useless talk, if you speak when you are not obliged to do so, out of necessity, charity, or propriety, then it is a waste of time, you steal time from love. As for extraneous interests, curiosity, etc., all these detach your spirit from the one thing to which you have vowed yourself: to love Jesus unceasingly and with a virginal love.

It is necessary, however, for you to realize that to carry out the Divine wishes, never to lose one act of love or one act of charity from one Communion to another, we should not do anything from your own initiative, by grace, no small amount of faith, and a generous, constant effort, above all, never let yourself become discouraged.

At every more or less voluntary, obstacle, renew your determination of virginal love and start afresh. If you lose, for your you suffering, you should offer it to Jesus — as an act of love. You will see and will be able to experience with what tender

you Jesus raises you up again after each fall—confidently, how He hastens to put you on your feet again, so that you may continue your canticle of love.

What will aid you most in offering Jesus the unceasing act of love, is to renew your resolution at every hour and to make a particular examen of your conscience concerning it. Keep in mind that in this particular examen about the unceasing act of love you are to note as faults only the time which you have wasted in useless talk or in following your imagination, your thoughts, etc. Make good your shortcomings and then take up your loving again with tranquillity.

The resolution, however, to which you must consecrate all your energies should always concern the unceasing act of love. Have no fear. Jesus will aid you. He has said: *I ask only one thing of you: an unceasing act of love. Love Me, for I thirst for your love. Love Me, and you will be happy; the more you will love Me, the happier you will be.* Jesus keeps His word!

So, have courage! Jesus and Mary will aid you. Never have any fear, but trust and believe in the love which He has for you.

Affectionately,
SISTER CONSOLATA, R.C.

TO ALL WHO ARE NOT LITTLE ONES

That is what Sister Consolata wrote to the Fairest Ones. But now we address ourselves to all those, and they are in the majority, who at this point will die of fear. As well and good: this is such a fine, but also very hard, lesson that increasing act of love.

We have already explained how the consolations of love should be understood, and that it is the effort which counts with God. But it must be admitted that in a few souls are granted by God Sister Consolata's perfection of the Fairest Way of Love, that is, in the unceasing and original act of love. It is true that Jesus foretold that they would be counted in the minority, as this is to be understood in the succession of time across the centuries, in the bosom of Mother Church, the Fairest Ones will therefore always form a minority, a small flock.

Nevertheless, the new message of the Fairest Ones is addressed to all souls, and it can become a source of great good, on account of the fact that, by act of love, it means saint Paul and the apostolate of love extend to all souls without exception. Even those who cannot offer the act of love unceasingly can still avail themselves of it for making progress in the interior life, for this is essentially a life of love. In other words, to a few souls the Fairest Ones, Sister Consolata says: "Follow me with this act of love, transformed into the act of unceasing prayer." To all others she says: "Avail yourselves of this act of love in the measure in which it is possible for you."

Whether one desires it or not, one needs some means for avoiding or combating the dissipation of energy, most of which chooses extraneous interests, useless words. Each soul chooses the means which is suitable for her and appears most to her spirit. It should be noted, however, that as soon as the first and most exterior act of love, which, no matter how far

multiplied but wrong as it comes from the heart shares this great excellence. So why not give the preference to that means which is the most excellent, the one dearest to Jesus, the one which is most profitable to the soul. We need not stress the fact that Sister Consolata's act of love and its formula is invested with a particular value because it comes from Jesus and because it seems to the mind of Jesus a love for Our Blessed Lady and a love for souls.

Such an act is therefore available to all souls, even those who are not religious. They can use the act as a simple exclamation to be recited frequently during the day, either vocally or silently, but always from the heart. An effort should be made to give value through the act to the many minutes throughout the day which would otherwise be lost in useless or even dangerous thoughts. Even if a soul does not succeed in giving to the Good God more than ten acts during the day, which would certainly not require any great effort, how large would be their number after a month or a year. Meanwhile, as it becomes a habit, it will not be without its graces, because the number unto day by day one gains a certain facility in offering the act, and therefore a more continuous union with Jesus.

Such was the intention of the Sacred Heart of Jesus when it dictated the doctrine of the act of love to Sister Consolata. Jesus suggested the act of love not only to the virtuous souls but also to the young in age and to all those persons who are not able to an uncasing act but only a frequent one. An act may not be uncasing with respect to one soul, but it becomes so when it is offered up by many souls simultaneously. In this way, little by little, there will arise collectively an uncasing part of the world, an uncasing wave of love, and this in turn will become transformed into a descending wave of uncasing love, of mercy and of pardon.

THE UNCEASING ACT OF LOVE AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE

Many is in wonder to what point the unceasing act of love carried Sister Consolata in the practice and perfection of Christian and religious virtues. That is a legitimate question, for one cannot form a definite judgment about a certain doctrine without first seeing the fruits in those who follow it. Although it is the purpose of this book to expound the doctrine of the unceasing act of love, rather than to treat of Sister Consolata's virtues, we have already shown that she possessed unusual virtue in trying to eliminate from her path everything that could prove to be a hindrance in following Jesus as perfectly as possible.

In any case we must bear in mind that the act of unceasing love, though of prime importance to the Eucharistic Way of Love, does not exist by itself completely. It must also embrace the two other points which Jesus indicated to Sister Consolata: a willing yes to the service of God, moment by moment, and a thankful yes to everything that Our Lord demands of the soul.

In that lies the practical truth of the life of love: that we exercise perfect charity toward our neighbor and accept God's dispositions concerning ourselves in a spirit of complete sacrifice and with a full response to grace. It is easy to see that a soul who maintains herself in a very faithful to these three points will advance securely and rapidly in every other virtue. That is what Jesus promised to Sister Consolata:

Remain always in your act of love: try not to omit one, and try also not to miss one act of charity. Gather with love the flowers of virtue which I will cause to bloom along your path, and the trust which you will bring Me will be abundant. (September 26th, 1935)

With the unceasing act of love you will attain the longest but

summit of love with your will to everything, the summit of sacrifice and these two peaks will generate the third that of the souls (June 21st, 1942).

These brief indications should suffice to persuade us that the path followed by Sister Consolata, understood and practiced in its entirety, is not based solely on sentiment but embraces a true and complete program for the spiritual life of the highest Christian and religious perfection.

8

SUMMARY

BACK TO THE SOURCE

It does not behoove us to make any pronouncement on this Message. We are only its transmitters. It is the Church which must authenticate its truthfulness. But every reader may form his own opinion as to its value in achieving the end for which it was dictated: to bring the world back to the source of every moral resurgence and social well-being: the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The true and complete Gospel teaches us not only to believe, but also to hope, and above all, to love.

In this sense, besides being a written book, the Gospel is the living word of those who saw and heard the Master, who listened to His message, as Saint John says, a message of revelation with God through the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus and therefore of grace and of friendship with Him.[1]

The prophet Jeremiah foretold the work of the messianic age with this call to the inner life: "Behold the days shall come

[1] I John 1-5, and 3-1.
John

says the Lord: and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void, though I had dominion over them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law within them, and I will write it in their heart: and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.[illegible]

Saint Paul proves this prophecy to have been fulfilled. The Gospel, therefore, does not wish to be merely a law written on paper, nor one of external observance, but a law which touches and interests [illegible] Gospel. It was written in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the Finger of God, with the effusion of a new life, the life of grace and of love, and without this the very letter of the Gospel would kill, as Saint Augustine well observes.

This transmission of new life affects an intelligence which accepts the doctrine of the Catholic Church, an faith which is fixed in the very depths of the human spirit through the use of the sacraments which give us grace, and has its living pulsation in the heart through the charity which establishes a life of friendship with Him,* and so there is fulfilled in us the great saying of the prophet which is repeated by Saint Paul:

And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

[illegible]

* Hebrews 8:8-10.

* John 15:12-15.

* Jeremiah 31:33; Hebrews 8:10.

THE LAW OF LOVE

Since it is a fact that God is Love, His law can be no other than a law of love. If we substitute a faith in that which pleases us for a faith in divine authority, and a religious experience for love, then we destroy the principle on which the hope of life is founded, and we annul the primacy of the great commandment which Jesus reconfirmed. Christian life is emptied of its content.

Then the second commandment will also become adulterated, being similar to the first:[1] "Love God in our neighbor." As a result, all other commandments also lose their consistency, since they are merely arbitrary conventions of the first and second, and we have chaos. Then believing will also become empty, because contempt for the law always rebounds upon the legislator, and behind it we have introduced chaos.

The moral and intellectual decay in the world today derives its origin, therefore, firstly from the fact that the Gospel was adulterated by changing the order which God desired: the supremacy of spiritual values and Christian values. As an unescapable consequence, the Gospel was emptied of all divine authority and, with its content, until it became reduced to a philosophical system of purely historical value. That is why the pseudo-reformations of the sixteenth century not only shattered the unity of the Christian people, but sowed the seeds of all the subsequent errors and apostasies. One cannot evaluate the Gospel without also evaluating the Law, Its Author and its crisis. A mutilated Gospel is no longer a Gospel. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty

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[1] John 4:16

[2] Matthew 22:39

of all.[10] All the more so when it concerns the point of departure, the very foundation and purpose of the whole Law.

The Gospel cannot be repudiated with impunity, as the world has found out through sad experience.

THE EVIL AND ITS REMEDY

So much for the field of evil. Now what about the good grain? It would be a great mistake to maintain that what we have said about the life of love would in some way lessen the need and importance of action, of all its outward manifestations. This writer is no hermit but a missionary, and for that matter hermits do not stand idle with folded hands either.

We would merely like to ask how it comes that we have not succeeded in damming the rising and inundating flood of evil which threatens to submerge the world. Were we too little active? It as it does not seem so. We may regret individual delinquencies, but on the whole there was organic vigour and many good actions. Was it not adapted to the needs of our times? That too cannot be maintained, at least as far as the whole of Christian activity is concerned. What then? The defect is this: it seems to us that on the one hand the *living flame* of the power has been lacking. "Without Me you can do nothing."[11] On the other hand there has been an absence of good topsoil to receive and fertilize the good seed. "He that abides in Me, and I in him, the same bears much fruit."[11]

I [illegible] this is what is needful: to the soul above everything else, both for doing good and for receiving good and

[10] John 15:5.

[11] John 15:5.

making but been fruit. Now to dwell in Jesus implies more than being in Him or being in the state of grace. It means to use the divine grace to make it grow and to perfect it continually within us. And that is achieved through our union with Jesus by drawing from Him as the branch from the vine, the divine life-blood which makes all Christian virtues healthy. Love, the vital sap, brings it to a head. "As the Father has loved Me, so have I loved you. Abide in My love." [a] Love is the life-blood of the branch which comes to the Father through Jesus.

When Pope Xystus revealed his encyclical on Spiritual Exercises to the world at the beginning of his period of world-wide rule, and when Pope Xystus XI sent out his encyclicals on the Mass, on Books, and on the Sacred Liturgy, superhuman minds agreed to see the connection between these papal documents and the needs of our spiritual world. But these pronouncements were and are in perfect focus in the exigencies of our times, for they were never heard, cause of all the evils and suffering in our world, superhuman minds of souls as the remedy.

Saint Paul said of himself, as he thought upon the author of his undertaking, "The charity of Christ urges us." [b] These are the very words which Saint Joseph Cottolengo made over the entrance door to that Little House of Divine Providence which is probably the greatest charitable institution the world has ever known, a spiritual defense of the students of this century, which is the court of Christ's work, which is called Christian Charity. The author has felt in these few pages of Saint Joseph Cottolengo's life, these were written by one who was thrown into contact with the sick and suffering for years. How much good these pages have already done. And how much

[a] John 15:9

[b] 2 Corinthians 5:14

more will they still do until the end of the world? It is the same with all other forms of the apostolate. When a soul draws strength and enthusiasm from Jesus "full of grace and truth"[13] and makes of her life an example of light like "a burning and shining light,"[14] then the works bear testimony to the Truth and communicate to other souls the ardor with which they are animated. We cannot give what we do not possess. On the contrary: "What I have I give you, in the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk."[15] This is what the world stands in need of: it has to rise again and take up once more its ascent; it has need of souls who are filled with Jesus in order to give Jesus.

The informative spirit of this *Message* lies entirely in this: that it makes us understand the need for a profound interior life, which is essentially a life of love, and the need to sanctify ourselves and others.

THE NEW GIFT OF THE HEART OF JESUS

Jesus points out the practical means for achieving this end through the Littlest Way of Love and its related work of the Littlest Ones. No one ought to be concerned about the multiplicity of spiritual ways existing in Christian ascetticism. This is not really a new way, nor could it be. The Way is a single one for everyone, in every age: "Jesus . . . am the Way." Sister Consolata follows the Little Flower in the same manner that the latter follows the Gospel, no more, no less. But this way which is always substantially the same, that is, love, can pass

[13] John 1:14.
[14] [illegible]
[15] [illegible]
[16] John 14:6.

through the most varied fields of Christian mysticism and so assume new aspects, new forms, and hence new names. In the same way new institutions are continually arising in the bosom of the Church without changing in the least her unity of doctrine and structure. In connection with the terms "Lordest Way" and "Fairest Soul" it must be pointed out that these were given by Jesus Himself in order to make Sister Consolata understand His teaching. He enlightened her about her habitual notions and explained the higher sense in which to use the Church's words. If the Church considers it holy and fruitful to use boys and girls who are still very young in years in her hierarchical organism for purposes of the apostolate, then it is only just and proper that the Lordest Soul's should also find a place in the organization of her spiritual life.

This is the tangible proof of this Message, that the unceasing act of love discovered to souls and propagated throughout the world. We have already told how the direction of the unceasing act of love, that is, the very essence of the new manifestation of the Heart of Jesus. This is hence the gift which Jesus gives us, the word and designs of the present moment, should escape no one. Jesus Himself added this after having foretold to Sister Consolata what immense good would result to the world from the practice of the unceasing act of love:

It was for this purpose that I had you ask each morning that through the merits of My adorable Passion there might triumph in the world not only My mercy, but particularly My love, and so perish souls of the Lordest Souls.

Lord, mercy is an paradox, but only His love can renew the world. "You shall send forth Your Spirit, and they shall be re-

Matthew 11:25 and 18:3

ated and Your spirit renew the face of the earth.* The Church applies these words to the action of the Holy Spirit in the world, which is the Spirit of Love, or rather Love Itself. A new Pentecost [illegible] will renew the face of the earth spiritually, and the work of the Latest Ones was decreed by Jesus for just this purpose.

Whoever has followed in these pages Our Lord's continual request for love, His reiterated declaration that He wished to save the world by love, and the divine promises regarding the permanent, universal and prodigious fruitfulness of this act of increasing love, cannot doubt but that the work of the Latest Ones was truly preordained by Divine Providence and Infinite Love to make a powerful contribution to the spiritual rebirth of the world.

[illegible] again God wishes to confound, through the insignificant, the means the intellectual pride which has obscured [illegible] the poor in spirit, bring down the strong men of the earth who think they can erect their own pagan [illegible] over the temple of Christianity. Through a [illegible] but very active ideal love God wishes to cute the wreath that permeates modern evil, which consists of a great noise of activity without being vivified by the Spirit of God.

[illegible] understood in this sense, the new Message might be termed a rainbow of peace projected from the Heart of Jesus upon the good world, which has released the springs of the living and heavenly gushing water of the Gospel in favor of the poor [illegible] and errant [illegible] to his death and [illegible] in the flesh, [illegible] to save [illegible] and after having [illegible] on the perilous brink and having purified it through suffering, He now wishes to bring it back to Him-

* Psalm 103:30

self through love, so that it may explain science what Sister Consolata learned through her life, the truth of the divine words:

Love Me and you will be happy; the more you will love Me the happier you will be!

God always wins out in this manner, through infinite mercy and infinite love!

TO YOU, O LORD!

Before laying down his pen, O Lord Jesus, Your servant humbles himself in Your sight for having dared to add his inadequate human words to what he considers Your words, and for having perchance spoiled Your work through his own ignorance and fault. But You are omnipotent, O Lord, and out of nothingness You bring forth everything, so You can make these very human failings serve to carry out Your designs. Therefore to You be all praise, honor, and glory.

And as ask, every effort is in vain which is not blessed by You, so I ardently implore that bene without ceasing for the infinite love which You have for men, Your creatures, Your redeemed brothers. I ask it through the intercession of her into whose Immaculate Heart You poured for us all the heavenly gushing stream which bursts forth from Your pierced Heart. And ask it through the prayers of that soul whom You chose as a messenger of Your love, who in response to Your gift of election and sustained by Your grace, knew how to consummate her life in an unceasing act of virginal love, in an uninterrupted invocation for the salvation of souls.

You told her one day: *When your last "Jesus, Mary, I love You!" Save souls" will have been uttered, I will rather it up and will convey it to millions of souls who, though they be sinners, will receive it and will follow you in the simple way of trust and love.*

and to my love. Me . . . I desire that a wave of love should ascend from the earth to heaven!

Now, the purest act of love has ceased on earth in order to perpetuate itself in heaven, gather it up and convert it to souls to all souls . . . to the innocent and to sinners, to those who stray from the Church, and to all who are sighing outside the fold. Make it fruitful through Your benediction so that it may perpetuate itself on earth, and so that the wave of love which You invoked may be formed and may grow. Then will men be remade Your sons through love, then will they become once again brothers to one another through charity, and the world will finally find again in Your Gospel of love and charity, its salvation and the way to its lost tranquillity.

Jesus, Mary, I love You! Save souls!

Appendix

SOME CLARIFICATIONS REGARDING THE WORK OF THE LITTLEST ONES

IN REPLY TO the inquiries which we have received, we give here in catechetical form a few short explanations concerning the Littlest Ones and their work.

Who are the Littlest Ones?

The term "Littlest Ones" must not be understood as referring to age; it refers to souls. The Littlest Ones are those souls who feel an attraction to follow Sister Consolata in her Littlest Way of Love, that is, in the way of the unceasing act of love.

How is the continuity of the act of love to be understood?

It is understood in relation to the state of life, the occupation, and the capacity of each individual person. It should also be kept in mind that during the time that a person is conversing with someone for reasons of necessity, charity, or decency, and while employed in work which absorbs the attention of the mind, then the act of love goes on in the sight of God, provided the soul takes care to direct all her actions to God with an intention. At other times, however, that is during

the free minutes throughout the day, the Littlest One should exert every effort to continue the act of love.

Is it necessary to pronounce the act of love with the lips?

No. It suffices to offer it with the heart. The purpose of the unceasing act of love is, in the intention of Jesus, to offer to souls a practical and easy means for achieving the deepest fervor of love for Him. It must not be a formula, thought or which is repeated mechanically, nor is it the number of acts which counts, but it is an unceasing abandonment of the soul to love, an uninterrupted effusion of love, a continuous and silent canticle of love.

Is not such a continuity of love through a fixed formula oppressive to the spirit?

I understood as above, the unceasing act of love has nothing oppressive about it for souls who sincerely desire to live a life of love of all perfection. Besides, Jesus has asked for it, and He has attached a particular unction to it, just as He grants a particular grace to the Littlest Ones, that they may be faithful to it. Experience has already shown that the more faithful a soul is to it, the more does the act of love become a real need for that soul.

Is it possible to achieve an absolute continuity in the act of love?

Without God's favor it is not possible for human creatures to arrive at an absolute continuity in the act of love. However, sustained by grace, the soul can achieve a moral continuity, that is, she can make the act morally unceasing through the effort of her will, which is all that Jesus asks.

Is it necessary to find pleasure in practicing the act of love?

As with all practices of the spiritual life, so in carrying out the unceasing act of love, it is not necessary that the soul should find in it a sensible pleasure. The fervor of the will suffices, if sustained by faith in the intrinsic excellence of the act of love and in the requests and promises of Jesus. In fact, it ordinarily happens that the soul does not find any sensible pleasure in it, and that is because God disposes matters so that the act of love may be the more meritorious and more fruitful of good for souls.

In what does the perfection of the unceasing act of love consist?

In this, as in all practices of the spiritual life, the soul can attain to a greater or lesser perfection. That consists principally in the following three requirements of the life of love — continuity of love: that is, to love with an actual love as continuously as possible ("You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart"); — purity of love: that is, to struggle against useless thoughts, words, and interests ("You shall love... with your whole mind"); — intensity of love: that is, to give to the act of love all possible intensity ("You shall love... with your whole soul, and with all your strength").

What of those who are not called to be Littlest Ones?

The act of love, as a means for progressing in the life of love, is offered by Jesus to all souls of good will without distinction — not then as an unceasing act of love, but as a frequent one.

What formalities are required in order to become one of the Littlest Ones?

No formality whatsoever: no registration, no insignia,

nothing of the kind. It is not a question of an association, society, etc., but of a spiritual life which is open to all souls who feel themselves drawn to it.

Is not even a special consecration required?

It is only natural that the soul who feels herself called to this way, should also feel the need of beginning it with a special consecration of herself to Love. It was thus with the first of the Littlest Ones and with the others who have already entered these privileged ranks.

How does one make this consecration?

There is no fixed procedure. Following the example of the first Littlest One, we would suggest the following: (a) select a certain day, preferably a feast of Our Lord or of Our Lady or a First Friday of the month; (b) prepare yourself by a novena or triduum of deep recollection and prayer; (c) on the predetermined day hear Holy Mass, and during Holy Communion offer your own consecration as a Littlest One, confiding it to the Heart of Jesus by the hands of Mary Most Holy; then conclude by reciting the *Magnificat*.

Is some special formula of consecration necessary?

No. The soul is free to express her own adhesion to the Littlest Way of Love as best suits her and as the heart dictates.

Could you nevertheless suggest a formula?

Here is one: "Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, who has loved men so much and asks nothing but love from them, I, (your name), being desirous to assuage the ardent longing of Your divine Heart, consecrate myself to You as one of the Littlest Ones

through the hands of the Immaculate Virgin, and I pledge myself to give You an unceasing act of love, to have a smiling 'yes' for everybody, and a thankful 'yes' for everything. O Good Jesus, receive this my act of consecration, submerge it in Your Most Precious Blood, strengthen it by Your omnipotent grace, so that I may be faithful to it even unto death, and that the unceasing act of love which I have begun on earth may perpetuate itself forever in heaven. O Sacred Heart of Jesus, thirsting for love and for souls, make me one of Your little victims of love to cooperate with You and with our Mother in the salvation of souls! Amen."

Does such a consecration bind the soul under pain of sin?

Absolutely not! Neither mortal sin nor venial sin; nothing of the kind! Therefore, you would not be committing a fault if you withdrew from the way you had embraced, or if you voluntarily neglected to practice the unceasing act of love. You would be merely depriving yourself of merit.

How should a soul proceed who feels herself attracted to this way?

She ought to proceed slowly, with calmness and reflection, so as to make certain whether such an impulse was the result of God's grace or merely a fleeting enthusiasm. The soul would do well to ask God for enlightenment through more assiduous prayer, and meanwhile she could practice the unceasing act of love for a certain length of time without assuming any formal obligation. Only after she finds out that heart and spirit fare well on this road, and that the interior life derives real benefit from it, only then should the soul make her consecration as one of the Littlest Ones.

PRAYER
FOR OBTAINING GRACES THROUGH THE INTERCESSION OF SR. CONSOLATA

Father of all compassion, You have brought among us Your servant sister M. Consolata Betrone to spread throughout the world the incessant love towards Your Son Jesus in the simple path of confidence and love.
Make us, too, capable, guided by Your Spirit, of being ardent witnesses of Your love and of Your immense bounty and grant us, by Your intercession, the grace which we need.
For Christ our Lord. Amen

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† Pier Giorgio Micchiardi

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